

# The American Mercury

AUGUST 1949

35 CENTS



**CLEMENT ATTLEE:**

**BLOODLESS REVOLUTIONIST**

*by FRANK OLIVER, page 133*

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**IS THE TOWN MEETING FINISHED?** *J.W.Alexander & M.Berger*

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# The American Mercury

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## ATTLEE: BLOODLESS REVOLUTIONIST

BY

FRANK OLIVER

HISTORY selects varying and sometimes strange instruments for its bigger purposes, but rarely has it selected such a strange instrument, to effect such an astonishing revolution, as Clement Attlee, Prime Minister of Great Britain. It is a popular belief that men of vivid personality, orators whose phrases sway a nation, men of towering intellectual stature, or at least men of burning passion, are chosen to turn the pages of history. Attlee, who is directing one of the greatest political experiments ever tried, falls into another category. A

political enemy of his is said to have described him as "a sheep — in sheep's clothing." This acid remark has an element of truth in it but it doesn't tell the whole story. He is a quiet man, unexciting and unexcitable, totally lacking in the spark, the verve, the compelling leadership, that Englishmen look for in their great public men. But he is none the less busy piloting 48 million people through the most remarkable revolution in the long history of the British nation.

Its opponents contest every step

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FRANK OLIVER is the New York correspondent of the British Sunday Times, and the American manager of the Kemsley Newspapers of London. He has been a newspaperman in the United States and the Far East for 25 years. This article is based on a chapter from *Men Who Make Your World*, by members of the Overseas Press Club, to be published soon by Dutton.

bitterly and Attlee's own party has been riven by dissension and personal quarrels among its leaders. Attlee has healed the party breaches, fought the opposition, and pursued his goal. A big though bloodless battle goes on, its end still in doubt, and whether it succeeds or fails, a stupendous political change will have been achieved and Britain set on a new and strange course.

Attlee is no John Bull, no representative of the beef-eating beer-drinking Englishmen of tradition and renown. He is a Fabian, an intellectual socialist, a parlor socialist. Fabians remind one naturally of Bernard Shaw, and Shaw reminds one of vegetarianism and cocoa. No matter how much beef Mr. Attlee ate, he could not but remind one of vegetarianism and cocoa. But this Fabian, the middle-class lawyer turned Labour leader, has proved to be an important instrument of history. He has done it by being an instrument of other minds. He has devised no new political theory, expounded no new doctrine, fired no imaginations with his own ideas. But when circumstances required a leader, Clement Attlee was selected.

When the electorate put the socialists into office in the summer of 1945, the circumstances were unique in British political history. A war had been won, but Britain's economy was

devastated and she was a debtor nation. Less than half her prewar export trade remained, and that had a decreased value. Her coal industry had been deliberately reduced in size to fit the nation's economy to war; hundreds of her textile mills had been closed for the same purpose. Her factories, railways and docks had suffered \$6 billion worth of damage; 4 million of her buildings had been destroyed or damaged by bombing; her overseas war debts totaled \$11 billion; half her merchant fleet of 18 million tons lay at the bottom of the sea. Her industrial equipment needed major repair or replacement. And to top it all, she was committed to heavy new expenditure for the relief of war-stricken countries and to maintain forces of occupation. On V-E Day, Hitler and the Nazi machine appeared almost to have achieved their object—the defeat of Britain. Her survival as a great power was at stake in the summer of 1945, when Britain went to the polls and Churchill and Attlee were meeting with Truman and Stalin at Potsdam.

Britain was rich in moral leadership. But for Britain to survive, moral leadership was insufficient. Economic re-adjustment on a colossal scale was essential, and revolutionary measures were necessary from whatever government secured power.



That the voters as a whole never realized the vast and complicated nature of the problems facing their country can be taken for granted. But the mysterious motives which move voters caused the British electorate to achieve the greatest political turnover in 113 years. It was still generally thought, that summer, that the socialist movement was a trade union affair. The election of 1945 proved, to the surprise not only of Conservatives but of many in the ranks of Labour, that the socialist party had attracted support from areas of political thought extending from center to left, and in doing so had cut across frontiers of class and income. A body of 12 million voters put the modest Clement Attlee in power and gave him an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons. The socialization of the United Kingdom began.

## II

Attlee is not of the working classes. He is a Fabian, and the Fabian Society is essentially a middle-class movement. In the years since 1918 (when Labour polled only 2,250,000 votes in the general election) two great forces had been pushing the Labour party along: the missionary fervor of the Independent Labour party (which preached the morality of better conditions and wider freedoms for the

worker, and the immorality of capitalism), and the Fabian section of the socialist movement, which was cooler in its approach to political problems and sought practical parliamentary means of putting the philosophy of socialism into practice. In 1945, circumstances put the leader of the Fabian side of the movement into power.

Clement Attlee, a somewhat bashful, diffident man, may well be termed typical of "ordinary Englishmen." It has been said that he is distinguished by lack of distinction. All the sturdy virtues are his in good measure. He is modest, competent, industrious, loyal, and moved by a stern sense of duty; he can be ruthless only in pursuit of duty. He is never bombastic, though he is sometimes shallow. He abhors political "stunts."

But despite his apparent diffidence, he possesses enormous confidence in himself, in his party, and in the program for which he fights. His program is no stunt. The policies he sets are held with tenacity and believed in as some men hold their religious beliefs. His serene confidence is typified by an incident which occurred in the summer of 1946. He was conducting a group of American newsmen over 10 Downing Street. Bounding up the stairs, he suddenly stopped before the portrait of a man whose prime ministership had been

counted in days. He chortled, "That's what the Tories said would happen to me. Well, I've been here for a year already and have no immediate intention of vacating."

In his youth, Clement Attlee appeared destined for a career in law and Conservative politics. The son of a successful lawyer, he was born in suburban London, went to a public school (by which we English mean a private school), and then to Oxford. His career at Oxford was typical of his later life. He is said to have worked hard, and he took second-class honors in modern history. Later he took an M.A., and many years afterwards he was made an honorary Fellow of his college. In other words, he got ahead even though he scarcely shone as a student.

A very young friend of mine, who is fourteen to be exact, was recently told by her aunt to try always to be *something*, not to be submerged in the herd. She took this to heart and later wrote to her aunt, "well, in the school exams I'm at the head of the 'fails.''" Perhaps it is not unfair to describe Attlee as at the head of the second class, never brilliant, never thrilling, but always good, reliable, sturdy second class. That isn't as damning as it sounds; first class is always too rare to fill many important public offices.

After Oxford, Attlee was called to the Bar, and began a career as a prac-

ticing lawyer. He was still, like his forebears, a Tory. His attachment to the laboring classes came in his twenties, and it was the result of cool mental processes; it was not a noisy, emotional conversion. Like many others of his class, he went in for "social work," which is often a euphemism for "slumming." It was then, in the East End of London, that he got to know London's workers, the hard-pressed, the underprivileged Cockney. He decided, in his quiet way, that they needed help, help towards better pay, more political power, wider freedoms. Quite unglamorously, he set to work to help them achieve these ends. It was about this time that he joined the Fabian Society.

He left a comfortable middle-class life and the assurance of a good income to live among the people he wanted to help. It must have been a difficult adjustment to make, for he was not content to be a middle-class man working among the working class. He determined to be one of them. This meant parting for good with many class prejudices, beliefs and usages, which, during the first twenty years of his life, he had acquired as naturally as he breathed. He made that adjustment, though not without difficulty. His friends say that he still suffers acutely if, in the excitement of an after-dinner conversation,

someone thoughtlessly passes the port in the "wrong" direction.

Attlee took a worker's modest house, did some soap-box speech-making, and entered local politics. He was elected to the Stepney town council and later became Mayor of that Borough. Then Limehouse, of which Stepney is a part, sent him to Parliament, the first man of middle-class origin to be elected to the House of Commons on the Labour ticket. He has represented that division ever since without interruption. Even in 1935, when Labour suffered a severe reverse at the polls, Limehouse re-elected Attlee. He has been loyal to the Stepney workers and they to him.

Since 1922, when he first entered Commons, he has filled a dozen government jobs without particular distinction, but always competently. In his long career, he has spent long hours on uninteresting jobs and has performed much drudgery for his party. The unkind could, and do, refer to him as the drudge who made good.

### III

Attlee was a gift to the Labour movement in Britain. His natural bent was to persuade and conciliate, to reconcile differences, to compromise, so long as the compromise advanced his purposes for the worker. These are methods that are typically British.

Britons are inclined to advance warily on a problem, survey it from all sides, and then attack it cautiously though firmly. They have not the American desire or flair for bridging a river or removing a mountain overnight. The British Labour party was thoroughly British in this. Cautiously, carefully and slowly, the socialists advanced their cause in British economic and political life. Into this scheme of things, and into this strategy, Attlee's mentality and temperament fitted perfectly.

The Labour party has produced few colorful or dynamic characters, but even among his fellow socialists Attlee's light shines dimmer than others'. There are others with greater intellectual force (like Cripps), others with warmer personalities and greater oratorical gifts (like Bevin), others with greater political shrewdness and greater organizing ability (like Morrison). But Attlee was a "safe" man, reliable, loyal and practical; and because of these qualities he was chosen in 1931 to be deputy leader of his party. Then, in 1935, on the resignation of George Lansbury and the death of Arthur Henderson, he became its leader. This again was Britishism. The socialists are not alone in choosing leaders in this manner. The Conservatives for many years shunned with considerable trembling the leadership of Churchill, who

wasn't considered "safe," who wasn't always predictable.

Safe qualities do not, of course, prevent a man from making mistakes, and Attlee has made his quota. He fought in the first world war, bravely and well, in Gallipoli, in Mesopotamia, and in France, and he retired with the rank of major. To fight he had to shed pacifist views. He took them up again after the war had been won.

He can point to no record, as Churchill can, showing that he pointed out the dangers to his fellow men and helped prepare to meet them. True, he denounced Hitler and criticized appeasement. But he never followed this line of thought logically to its end by urging practical measures to meet the danger that Hitler represented. He opposed conscription to the last, not perhaps because he didn't see the dangers ahead, but probably because conscription was a thing that cut directly across an Englishman's inborn resistance to regimentation in any form. (He got over this abhorrence of regimentation, however, after 1945, when he initiated the greatest program of social regimentation that any government has ever dared conceive for Britain in time of peace.)

Once the Nazi danger was generally recognized to be inescapable, Attlee fought with a will to destroy Hitler

and all he stood for. This was no trimming of political sails to popular winds. That he has never done. It was because the light had finally struck him.

During the war years, Churchill had no more loyal lieutenant than Attlee, and Attlee today fully credits the services of his predecessor in office. He told a joint session of Congress in Washington in November 1945, "For five years I had the privilege of serving under [Churchill] as a colleague. No one knows better than I do the resplendent services he rendered to the cause of freedom." He meant every word of it, but that hasn't prevented him since from telling Churchill publicly that he "has ceased to be a statesman," or from accusing him of "making party capital out of national necessity." He means that, too.

Under Churchill during the war, Attlee's rôle remained what it had been in the Labour party. He continued to perform the drudgery of the small and unexciting. Churchill was the orator, the planner, the dynamic leader who carried a nation with him. His deputy, Attlee, worked on infinite detail, got disagreeable things done, read humdrum speeches to the House of Commons, gave directions and instructions. He worked infinitely hard, because the existence of his country and his party were at stake.

## IV

Although he has no immediate intention of vacating Downing Street, the Prime Minister was probably much more at home in his suburban house in Stanmore than he ever will be in his official residence. Neither he nor his wife is fond of social life. Family gatherings and frequent visits to the theatre satisfy the Attlees.

Their house is precisely the kind of rather ugly but comfortable Victorian structure one would expect to find them occupying, and the furnishings go with the exterior. Dark and rather gloomy, the house is filled with reasonably comfortable, useful but undistinguished, furniture, with the Prime Minister's study perhaps the most interesting room in the house. But this room contains no surprises. It is lined with books and furnished with a solid desk and those well-worn leather armchairs that seem to be a speciality of English clubs and studies. Racks of pipes are prominent; the Prime Minister is a heavy smoker. The room is sacrosanct and no one is allowed to re-arrange it.

Outside is the usual garden attaching to an English suburban villa and in it a tennis court, the pride and joy of the owner. During the war, the family kept chickens to provide an occasional egg for breakfast, and the exigencies of war can be judged from

the fact that only those exigencies persuaded Mr. Attlee to let the chickens have the run of his beloved tennis court.

Tennis and cricket are his sporting interests, and in the summer he is a frequent visitor to Wimbledon and Lords. Family tennis is a big part of the Attlee life, and the Prime Minister's game is a good one. He is described by those who know him as a good tennis player and a terrible dancer.

He is domesticated and, according to his Stanmore housekeeper, never fusses. He likes to get his own breakfast, but he doesn't confine his cooking to boiling eggs and frying bacon. In the House of Commons he will run out of his office to get a cup of tea instead of having his secretary call to have one sent in. He tells those who draw his attention to this quite unnecessary habit that he is sure the staff must be busy.

Both Mr. Attlee and his wife must be described, in their religious life, as devout; they attend church regularly and lead what can only be called a completely upright life. If anyone in Britain lived absolutely by the letter of the rationing law, it was the Attlees.

The unexcitability of this man cannot be better illustrated than by his actions on the day that he knew he was Prime Minister of the United

Kingdom, and that his party had won one of the most resounding victories in British political history. Labour hadn't expected to win over the popular wartime leader Churchill, so that there was all the more reason for ecstatic celebration. Attlee visited Transport House that morning, took the results pretty calmly, and then disappeared. Not even the press could find him. He went to the Paddington Hotel for a quiet family lunch with his wife, and their youngest daughter, who had just come home from school. In the rather dull lunch room of a railway hotel the new Prime Minister of England, who was about to direct a revolution in British political and economic life, passed quite unnoticed.

As a leader, there are many things he lacks, and one of the most obvious is his inability to speak in a way that evokes immediate emotional response. In times of difficulty and stress, this is more than a weakness in the leader of a party carrying through an enormous experiment. He does not speak in a way that convinces his hearers they are participating in a great political and historical drama. He lacks warmth and vitality.

This oratorical weakness was never demonstrated more clearly than when he had to address the British people on a crisis in foreign affairs — at the time the American loan was running

out and pledges of convertibility of sterling had to be broken. It was an important speech, to which every thinking Englishman should have listened. But the Prime Minister began by saying he knew that when they heard his voice there would be many who would want to switch off the radio. He asked them not to do it for a minute or two because he had something of importance to say. Could modesty go further — or oratory be worse? His epigrams, which often read well, lose much of their point and force when they are delivered in his thin, metallic voice. He once described Ramsay MacDonald as "a political nudist 'who has shed every rag of political conviction he ever had.'" Churchill could have done wonders with that.

V

Attlee's hold on Limehouse affections obviously does not rest on his oratorical talents. In his Stepney days he acquired a sympathy for, and a first-hand understanding of, the workers' problems, and these things color his political attitude. Limehouse people return the affection and regard which he acquired for them in his early political days. It is typical of him that of all the members of his Cabinet he is closest not to Cripps, a fellow-lawyer who is also from the upper middle class, but to Ernest Bevin,



the man of the people, the trade-union leader who is totally uneducated in the sense that Attlee and Cripps are.

His Parliamentary success is also rooted in his ability in committee. Like Neville Chamberlain, whom in some ways he resembled, he is a first-class chairman of committee, who can reconcile differences, referee arguments, sum up discussions in masterly fashion, and then propose reasonable compromise decisions. He can dominate his cabinet and is always master of policy.

When he succeeded to the leadership of the party, it was a torn and disintegrating body. He had to re-fuse it into a whole, and he has largely succeeded in this. He could not afford to let one faction appear to have his ear; he had to appear aloof and above the storms in the party. He could not, as Francis Williams has written, "afford the luxury of intimates, still less the worship of a group of sycophants."

His legal training permitted him to be the judge, weighing each issue fairly and honestly. In the party he came to endure what I once heard a British judge describe as "the cold isolation of the Bench." But it was a rôle he was fitted for, and into which he always seemed to fit happily and comfortably. He is an introvert, which is unusual in a successful politician,

and this habit of closing in on himself, of debating an issue within his own mind instead of with friends and intimates, has made it difficult for him to be warm in his dealings with those he does not know well. It is recorded that once his sense of duty moved him to call in a minister and ask for his resignation. He gave no explanation until the shocked minister asked for one. The reply was brief and hard: "I don't think that you measure up to the job." And that was the end of the interview. No wonder then that there is a general belief that the kind of life he has led, the closing in on himself to reach conclusions solitarily in his own mind, has somewhat dehumanized him.

But he does not forget old friends. While he was in San Francisco as a delegate to the United Nations conference, he found time to have dinner with a former neighbor from Stepney, now a printer in San Francisco. After a quiet meal and some reminiscent talk of early days in Stepney, Attlee went into the kitchen of the modest apartment and helped wash the dishes, not as a condescending favor, but as the most natural thing in the world, which for him it was.

His political obituary notice, since he took office, has been written many times. There has been serious discussion about who should succeed him.

Actually, more than one member of his cabinet would be happy to replace him. I remember talking in Washington to one of his cabinet, who was discussing Churchill's reactions to losing the premiership. Then, rocking backwards and forwards on heels and toes, he added, "It's very nice to be prime minister you know," and the heartfelt yearning and ambition in his voice was so apparent as to be painful. Nor is he the only minister to covet Attlee's position.

But the Prime Minister's strength inside his party has been consistently under-rated. Four years after taking office, his position at the head of the party seems to be stronger than ever. In the party his record is extremely good. He has kept aloof from internal partisan warfare, of which there has been plenty.

It was in 1937 that Attlee said, "A Labour government when it is returned to power will not dissipate its power by dealing only with minor matters. It will proceed at once with major measures while its mandate is fresh. It will initiate measures in every department of government designed to fit in with a general plan." Completely convinced of the ethical and economic correctness of the socialist case, that is exactly what he is doing. Regardless of what has happened in the meantime, he is going ahead with untried policies based on

text-book theories, formed before the world was turned upside down by world-wide conflict. For the first time in history, socialist theories are being tested for their practicality in an industrial country holding a key position in the democratic world. Simultaneously, an attempt is being made to re-shape British imperialism and to secure for Britain once more her position as a world power. This triple program of such startling proportions is being attempted in circumstances of over-awing difficulty, at a time when the international scene is filled with danger and Britain's freedom of diplomatic action in it severely cramped.

Seldom has any government taken a calculated risk of such proportions. Socialists call it boldness and courage on a heroic scale; their opponents term it a piece of unexampled recklessness. It is too early yet to say which side is correct. Certainly, the situation in 1945 called for drastic, even Draconian, measures. What the Conservatives would have done cannot be known. But the socialists decided that socialization was the medicine, and they continue to administer it in large doses. It looks like a kill-or-cure treatment, resting on the assumption (yet to be proved) that a planned socialist system is more efficient, economically speaking, than the private

enterprise system, and that when established it will give broader social justice, greater national security and wider freedoms, than the individual enjoyed under capitalism.

Whether it succeeds or fails, its influence on political thought in Britain and elsewhere will be enormous. Attlee and his followers are confident of success. Their opponents feel that socialist "success" can only be achieved by a further move to the left, into the regions where lurk Communism, controls *ad infinitum*, complete regimentation and totalitarianism, and that therefore "success" will really mean failure, in that the freedoms which began with Magna Carta and which

have been cherished through the centuries will be no more. They point out that to put this program into effect the socialists extracted from the House of Commons a five-year extension of war-time controls, a mandate for regimentation, such as had never been asked for by any British government in time of peace. Success or appalling failure lie at the end of the course Mr. Attlee is following. He is the chief administrator of this revolution. His personality and mind are indelibly stamped upon it, and it will go down in history bearing his name. That is why this quiet, unimpressive figure must be set down as a man of destiny.

## HOME PORT

BY ROBERT HILLYER

Have the boats all come home yet?  
Are the sails off the Sound?  
From the masthead of sunset  
I look far around;  
The blue water is empty now  
Under Long Island's dark brow.

The day should never end at all,  
A happy day like this.  
I must remember to recall  
When things go amiss  
The fair wind that failed never  
And how I wanted to live for ever.

## IS THE TOWN MEETING FINISHED?

BY JOHN W. ALEXANDER & MORROE BERGER

ON OCTOBER 4, 1948, a New England town which we shall call Winston celebrated its annual political holiday. The townspeople voted for local officials, participated in a parade, and some of them looked forward to the town meeting in the evening. About 2300 of Winston's 2600 registered voters cast their ballots, but fewer than 200 citizens were interested enough to attest to the vitality of "pure democracy" by going to the town meeting.

It wasn't that the meeting wouldn't take up important local matters. There was the town budget to be voted upon, a decision on new street lights to be made, a report on sewage and water supply to be presented, and finally, the results of the day's election were to be announced. Not many Winston townsfolk considered this agenda worth their personal attention. It is hard to estimate how many persons attended the town meeting merely out of reverence for this ancient New England institution. A few

were caught up in the general but moderate excitement of the holiday. Some close friends of the candidates for first selectman were anxious to learn who'd won the election. A handful of people felt especially peeved or elated about the items in the budget and wanted to state their views or to needle the budget committee. But the meeting produced fewer than half a dozen questions and no hot arguments; it proceeded rather perfunctorily to its close an hour and fifteen minutes after it had begun.

This was the New England town meeting. It is an institution which we, perhaps like many others, had come to venerate as the last stronghold of pure democracy because we had read so many laudatory accounts of it. But we had no first-hand knowledge until we examined it recently during a survey of three New England towns which we conducted for the Columbia University School of Engineering. Many writers contributed to the shaping of our admiration for the

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town meeting. Two years ago one writer stated: "In these smallest units of American government, these 'cells' of pure democracy, the citizens rule directly." Another asserted in a book published at the height of the Nazi-Communist challenge to democracy in 1940: "In a world where democracy perishes . . . it is startling and refreshing to find the New England Town Meeting alive and able and in the hands of a tight-fisted people who keep their heritage well." Campaign oratory produces its share of plaudits for the town meeting. Speaking in Massachusetts last fall, Governor Earl Warren proclaimed: "It is neither necessary nor desirable for the national government to depart from the spirit of the old town meeting of New England."

To our surprise we found these praises mainly folklore, a sentimental devotion to a past misunderstood and a present vastly exaggerated. The town meeting may be alive in some places, but it was dead in the three contrasting towns we studied. In Winston, a highly industrialized town of 5000 which is dominated by two big plants employing the great majority of the wage earners, the regular annual meetings generally draw a couple of hundred persons, while special town meetings often draw as few as thirteen and never more than about forty participants. In "Richfield," a

residential-commercial town of 5000 that is a showplace of colonial New England architecture and tradition, only twenty or twenty-five persons have attended the town meetings. In very recent years attendance in Richfield has been greater because there is a hotly-contested zoning issue now under discussion. In "Barrington," an industrial town of 30,000, town meetings play an even less important rôle, since Barrington is also a city and is governed by a mayor and a council. The town meeting as we found it is perfectly described in a cartoon which appeared in a Richfield citizens' club report of a few years ago. On one side of the town hall the artist drew a town crier in a colonial costume, ringing his bell and announcing, "Town Meeting Tonight." On the other side of the hall a Richfield citizen was fleeing in the opposite direction.

How are we to interpret New Englanders' lack of interest in an institution which has won the deep (if ritualistic and uninformed) respect of Americans from other sections of the land? An easy answer is to say that the political apathy supposedly characteristic of the large urban centers has now developed in smaller communities as well. But it must then be pointed out that in Winston, Richfield and Barrington the percentage of adult citizens who register and vote

is certainly not smaller than the proportion for the United States as a whole. It is difficult to compare voting participation in these three towns with that of the rest of the nation because this New England state has continuous registration — that is, a voter registers once and that registration permits him to vote year after year. In Winston voting has usually been high. Last October's local election, for example, brought out the votes of nearly 90 per cent of the registered voters, and a like percentage took part in the national elections the following month. Yet for the United States as a whole, only about 50 per cent of the adult citizens actually voted last November.

The real answer, we think, lies elsewhere. Bigness has come to the American small town. This, in its economic aspect, is nothing new. Thorstein Veblen, the great American social thinker, a quarter-century ago pointed to the influence of Big Business in the rural community: "It has been falling into the position of a way-station in the distributive system, instead of a local habitation where a man of initiative and principle might reasonably hope to . . . bear his share in the control of affairs without being accountable to any master-concern 'higher-up' in the hierarchy of business."

What we are now witnessing in the

decline of the town meeting as an effective instrument of self-government is the political side of the economic process to which Veblen referred. Business has become national in organization, market, and general focus of interest; the economic unit is no longer a small area, a town or region — it is the entire stretch of country to the West and the South. And government has followed this broadening and centralizing tendency too. The result is that the reach of the town meeting has become relatively smaller, while the reach of state and Federal power has extended farther and farther. The great business organizations and centralized government profoundly affect life in the small town.

## II

The issues that touch our lives intimately today are the issues that are grappled with and settled at the level of the state and Federal government, and by economic forces beyond the ken, much less the control, of the small community. Such issues are jobs, wages, social security, union organization, prices, hours of work, war and peace, the allocation of manpower and materials for the production of all kinds of goods, entertainment and even education. Big Government and Big Business and Big Labor deal with these problems. The town meeting is



powerless to affect their solution. We think, then, that the New Englander who goes to a movie or listens to the radio while the town meeting drones on is not necessarily remiss in fulfilling his obligation or in exercising his rights as a citizen. For all he can do at a town meeting to make his influence felt in the significant affairs of political and economic life he might as well be enjoying himself at the Bijou or in his favorite easy chair.

Thus far we have been discussing the people who stay away from town meetings. But what about those who attend them — what motivates them? “Folks around here come to a meeting only when an issue touches their pocketbooks,” the first selectman of one town told us. “What I mean is,” he went on, “people won’t bother to come around unless some particular matter interests them — say, snow removal, or zoning, or something like that.” Even in matters of purely local concern, however, we found that a citizen doesn’t always have to attend the town meeting. He can get the first selectman on the phone and tell him, “Say, Walt, when do you think you’ll be able to get the road gang up here? You know, last spring’s thaw left some mighty bad holes in the road, and it wasn’t too good to begin with.” And Walt does what he can to oblige — but the town meeting is nowhere in this picture.

The town meeting, we have said, does not affect the solution of the basic problems of living which most of us face. But even those questions which it does examine and vote upon are already structured before they reach the town meeting. Take, for example, the main business of most town meetings, the consideration of the budget presented by the board of finance. This budget, like that of the Federal government, represents a statement of policy since it allocates the town’s resources and sets the tax rate. The board holds public hearings on its budget suggestions, but these special meetings attract even fewer townsmen than the annual town meetings in the fall. The board’s budget is not effective until the regular town meeting has ratified it, but by that time its general character has already been settled and the town meeting has little freedom of choice in settling this most significant of all the issues placed before it. For the assembled citizens may neither increase the appropriations made by the board of finance, nor may they add new ones. This limitation upon pure democracy has been imposed by the state government, and it makes of the town meeting little more than the occasion for a referendum on the budget presented by the powerful board of finance. Here is no “pure democracy” in the sense meant by the enthusiastic ad-

mirers of the town meeting — it is simply representative democracy (which, incidentally, is a pretty good brand too).

Other matters which come up at town meetings relate to the schools, roads and welfare. All of these functions are no longer left exclusively to the town meeting, since the local agencies and officials for many years responsible for these activities must also answer to state boards. Sewage and water supply problems, too, are handled by outside professional engineers whose expert testimony is then considered by the appropriate town agencies before the alternatives are placed before the town meeting.

It is clear what has happened. The old powers of town meetings, themselves of only limited significance for most persons, have passed to local elective and appointive officials. Representative democracy has displaced the “pure democracy” of the town meeting as the effective means of local self-government. The issues remaining for the town to settle become fewer and fewer, but broader and broader, just as in the government of our states and the nation. Today only the very broadest policy control is exercised by the voting citizen.

Despite the town meeting’s loss of political relevance, it has continued to function in many places as an expression of the townspeople’s com-

munity spirit, a reaffirmation of their solidarity. This kind of vitality, however, appears to characterize mainly the meetings in small towns, where there is a high proportion of self-employed persons or jobholders in small business units, a high proportion of residents whose families have lived in the town for generations, and a small proportion of persons of recent foreign descent. The three towns we studied, with the partial exception of one, do not have these traits. They have populations of 5000 and over, a high proportion of their workers are employed by large manufacturing companies, relatively few belong to families that have lived in the towns for generations, and there is a very high proportion of foreign-born and second-generation residents, especially in Winston and Barrington. In the urban areas the town meeting is weak. What matters is not size or population, but rather the nature of the town’s economic life and the ethnic and regional origin of its people.

The extent to which the myth of the town meeting has spread outside of New England was brought home to us in a talk we had with one of Richfield’s leading citizens. Upon his retirement twenty years ago from a highly successful business career in New York, he chose to live in Richfield because of its long and famous tradition, and because he was anxious

to participate in the local self-government for which New England was famous. "At first," he told us, "I attended town meetings regularly, but eventually I had to admit to myself that they mean little either as a legislature or a public forum. Their values, I found out, are mythical ones. I hardly ever go any more." But he did not withdraw from Richfield's community life. Finding that he could participate in local affairs without going to town meetings, he has become Richfield's elder statesman and its presiding authority on local history.

### III

Governmental functions of the town meeting were transferred to town agencies soon after the town meeting itself developed in the colonial period. Very early, therefore, the town meeting took on a non-governmental rôle as an expression of community solidarity, and town meeting time became a day of festivity and reunion among friends and acquaintances who might not often see each other throughout the year. Perhaps its main function was similar to that of a local fair.

Today, however, fewer and fewer New England town meetings serve even this social function. Towns are too big, for one thing, and everyone knows that the meeting-place won't

hold more than a small percentage of those eligible to attend. The growth of transportation facilities has made it easier for people to get to town meetings, but they haven't used these facilities for that purpose. The penetration of urban patterns of living into rural areas and small towns has, too, stripped the town meeting of some of its significance. People nowadays don't come into contact very often with persons who belong to different social groups except in a fleeting way; we live segmented lives, with but infrequent overlapping of the separate parts of our existence. George Wilson, for example, is a church-going Protestant, a Republican, a clerk in the Winston branch of a large nationwide corporation, a Mason, and so on. George is a member of one group for his recreation, another for his religious worship, another for the purpose of earning a living, and still another for going out for a good time. In none of these rôles and activities is he likely to meet or to feel that he has much in common with Stanley Wisniewski, a church-going Catholic, a Democrat, a member of the Polish-American Society, and a semi-skilled worker in the same branch factory in Winston. Community activities, then, have become specialized and departmentalized: we join special groups for special purposes, and we no longer tend to belong to generalized com-

munity groups, such as the town meeting.

We can, of course, say that all this is too bad, that a town meeting at which the Winston manufacturer and the lathe operator can discuss local problems in a spirit of cooperation is a good thing. But the manufacturer's political and economic interests are focused on the state or the national capital, and the chances are that he doesn't even live in Winston but in some nearby residential town. As for the lathe operator, the decisions that affect the basis of his existence are certainly not made at town meetings, and the prospect of talking over town matters with the industrial and political leaders probably scares more than it attracts him. What can he gain, he reasons, by sitting alongside his boss at a discussion of the need for new street lights? Such a meeting has no relevance to the things he sees as important in his life, for this sort of equality is neither an index of, nor a means to, any other equality which he values more highly. We may deplore this situation, or we may choose to ignore it, but we can't deny that it exists.

Those who extol the town meeting frequently quote Jefferson's well known tribute to the towns of New England: "They have proved themselves the wisest invention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect

exercise of self-government and for its preservation." Because journalists, intellectuals and politicians who want to "get down to the grass roots" sentimentally overestimate the rôle of the town meeting (and because one good quote deserves another), we should like to repeat what John Dewey, another great American democrat, has said of the machinery of democratic government: "It is a form of idolatry to erect means into the end which they serve. Democratic political forms are simply the best means that human wit has devised up to a special time in history."

What are these democratic forms? Perhaps up to Jefferson's "time in history" the town meeting was the best means for the practice and maintenance of local self-government. Today, at least, the best means is no longer the town meeting but the representative system. We think that the people of New England, who have actually shifted from reliance upon the town meeting to reliance upon representative democracy, are far more realistic than those misled admirers of the town meeting who are oriented toward a past that cannot be recovered. Does the fact that the town meeting's direct form of democracy is obsolete mean that democracy is out-moded too? This question was answered long ago by the development of the newer democratic form,

representation. As representative governments, the small communities now face the same major problem that the nation faces with respect to the Federal government: how can we secure expert handling of the technical, complex affairs of our welfare state, and yet leave the control of policy in the hands of an electorate that has neither the training nor the time to comprehend these affairs in detail?

All of us are in the process of working out the answer to this question on every level of government, but the crucial, the decisive answer is being worked out in our relation to the Federal government. Our focus of political interest is upon the government at Washington, and less than ever on the local community. It is this change in focus, we believe, that explains the fact that in Winston, Richfield and Barrington only scores attend the town meetings, whereas over 90 per cent of all the registered voters went to the polls in the national election last November.

We must always be ready to examine anew the forms we consider to be the means of democratic government. The social basis for the direct form of democracy known as the town meet-

ing has disappeared even from the local scene; that basis was the small, autonomous, homogeneous and somewhat isolated community. Are we developing new techniques appropriate to the kind of society we live in now? — with extreme interdependence of widely-separated areas, social and class differences of which we are becoming ever more conscious, specialization in economic and political affairs, and the departmentalization of our group life which we have already mentioned. What part can local government play in such a fundamental revaluation? It is probably not too much to say that we shall be unable to make the necessary adjustments on the national level if we find ourselves unable to make them on the local level.

It is self-deception to pride ourselves on the town meeting when it apparently doesn't function where it is supposed to, and when its rôle is misunderstood. The evidence we have found about the town meeting certainly demands serious reflection on some assumptions that we have been accepting without much thought. The town meeting is a sacred cow that deserves to be laid to rest.



# THE MORRO CASTLE TRAGEDY

BY WILLIAM MCFEE

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1934, the twin-screw turbo-electric liner *Morro Castle* sailed from Havana on her homeward run to New York. On September 8, in a storm of wind and rain, she was heading for the Ambrose Channel, where she would pick up her pilot. It was nearly three o'clock in the morning. Her 534 passengers and most of her crew of 230 men and women were asleep.

The usual Friday night conviviality had been clouded by an unusual event. Captain R. Willmott had taken ill at dinner and died within a few hours. It was a strain for the chief officer, Mr. William F. Warms, who had come off watch at eight o'clock. To face the sudden responsibility of taking over the command of the ship would impose a burden on the strongest of men.

The gap between chief officer and master of any ship is wide enough, but in this particular case much of the executive authority traditionally as-

sumed by a chief officer had been retained in his own hands by the dead captain. We have to keep this in mind when we come to the actions of Captain Warms, suddenly confronted with the most terrifying emergency to be faced by the master of a vessel crowded with helpless, sleeping passengers.

At 2:55 Mr. Hackney, acting second officer, saw smoke issuing from the stokehole. He called from the bridge to know "if there was a fire in the engine room." Cadet Engineer William F. Tripp, an eighteen-year-old MIT student, replied in the negative. He knew of no fire. At 2:58 Mr. Hackney pulled the fire alarm anyway.

By this time, Captain Warms was on the bridge. Accepting the official record, confirmed by Mr. Tripp's log-sheet, we face the extraordinary facts that: (1) some eighteen minutes elapsed before the captain ordered a radio call for assistance; (2) the radio

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operator, Mr. Rogers, whose cabin, fifty feet aft of the navigating bridge, was on fire, sent three times to ask for instructions; (3) other ships near by saw the fire and sent calls before the *Morro Castle* call went out; (4) the ship was kept at nineteen knots, into a twenty-mile wind, in darkness, pouring rain, and pounding seas, before being stopped.

Most of the passengers, suddenly awakened by the loud-speakers, frightened by the roaring flames and the running of men who had lost their wits and had no one to command them, surged aft through the smoke-filled passages. In such a case the word "panic" is inadequate. These people, running through corridors of a burning ship, half-clothed and many of them half-demented, were in a bad way. When they came out on the after rail, it was raining in torrents. There was no light save the flames leaping at them from the superstructure. Below them was the dark turbulence of the sea, dotted with crying people in life belts, calling to the boats dimly seen, standing off fearfully from the heat of the burning ship. Desperation came to these people, and a measure of courage too. Down they went, jumping, or sliding down ropes, and, being inexpert at such business, scorching their soft hands, so that some of them were forever incapacitated for their professional work.

There were many women there too, and they threw off their flimsy shoes by the rail, discarding their lipsticks and compacts, their lighters and cigarettes and girdles, as though, when faced with the final, grim, eternal verities of the sea, they instinctively abandoned the non-essentials.

## II

It is logical and even inevitable now to regard the events of that fatal morning off Barnegat, in a storm of wind and rain, as the classic modern example of a marine disaster. Nothing was wanting to complete the picture. It cost 342 lives. There was incompetence, panic, evasion, ignorance, credulity, and avarice. And from the first moment of alarm, legend and myth began to crystallize around the stark facts of the tragedy.

There were many ships near by. Every ship south-bound from New York, every ship coming up from the Americas, is on this course, to or from Ambrose Channel. What was remarkable was their inability to get a clear notion of what was going on, on board the *Morro Castle*. It must have seemed to some of those commanders, peering through the rain, that there were lunatics on board. How otherwise explain a ship in flames driving into a twenty-mile gale? How explain the delay in sending out a call?

How explain the inexplicable?



There were the boats burning on their chocks. There was the speed with which the fire, discovered in a locker in the writing room, upstairs on B deck, abeam of the forward funnel, became a roaring furnace. This speed the *New York Times* on the following Monday morning described as "a mystery." It remains a mystery if we accept the official contention that the fire started between two and three o'clock. But there is reason to believe it began long before that, and did not originate in the locker. When Mr. Hackney asked Mr. Tripp, down at the engine-room telegraph, if there was a fire down there, he may not have been so far off the track after all.

Among those who have had experience of ships like the *Morro Castle*, the natural reaction to the extraordinary lethargy of the personnel would be, Where was the watchman? What was he doing all this time? Why was "a fire in the writing room," a public space on B deck, only a few feet away from the bridge, not reported? And why did not the automatic fire-detection system warn the officer of the watch?

Shrewd questions, but they have the simplest answers. The watchman, it was revealed at the inquiry, had so many other duties he had little time to watch. In ships under discipline the watchman makes his rounds,

as in a factory or store on land. He has a key which he plugs into the system at various points on his itinerary, to record his vigilance. This is his duty, and he has no others. But on the *Morro Castle*, he said, he had many other duties, so that he was not really a watchman at all, in the legal sense.

The writing room, where the watchman, if he made his rounds, had noticed nothing unusual, had no fire-detection apparatus. Writing letters, however passionate or inflammatory, was not considered by the builders to be a fire hazard. When the *Morro Castle* was launched, she was publicized as "the safest ship afloat." So we have the picture of a splendid, modern ship, of 15,000 tons' displacement, suddenly bursting into flames which roar along the alleyways and trap sleepers in their beds, and nobody seems to know what to do. The stories told by passengers sound like fiction, yet they were corroborated so often, and they fit so closely into each other, that there can be no controversy. The fact is that for a while the ship had no direction at all. We have the evidence of a passenger, an expert fire-fighter, that the crew did not know how to lay out the hoses.

### III

More than one Congress had been bedeviled by the problem of how to have an American Merchant Marine

without emptying the Treasury. Millions of dollars had been poured into the industry, and the industry had sooner or later reached a state of receivership and disintegration. The Shipping Board had become the greatest pork barrel in the history of the country. And still there was no Merchant Marine. Capitalists were no longer interested in risking their capital on American ships. Shippers did not permit their patriotism to interfere with their business. They patronized any firm under any flag which delivered cargoes on fast, dependable schedules.

Something had to be done and something was done. The Jones-White Bill of 1928 provided a construction fund of \$250 million. This legislation authorized the construction of the sister ships *Morro Castle* and *Oriente*. They were cruise ships. They also carried mails and cargo. They maintained a fast service between New York and Cuba, but their primary function, the function which made them pay, was taking round-trip cruise passengers from New York. Their cost was around \$4 million apiece. The United States government held a first mortgage of \$3,422,181 on each ship, with very low interest charges.

The *Morro Castle*, then, was a first-class ship of the most modern design, and it is reasonable to accept

her as one of the safest ships of her day. Her fire-fighting equipment was the best of its kind in 1930. The Darby fire-alarm system was installed everywhere except in the public rooms. Down below, the cargo space was equipped with the Rich smoke-detecting apparatus. There was also a Lux carbon-dioxide system for smothering fires in the engine room. There were nearly a hundred fire extinguishers on brackets all over the ship. There were 2100 feet of canvas fire hose.

What more was needed? What more could any steamship owner provide for the protection of his patrons? The answer is, Nothing except personnel of the same quality as his ship. There was nothing the matter with the *Morro Castle* that night except personnel.

There was a musty odor of slackness in running the ship. According to Section 2 of the Seaman's Act, the crew should have been divided into day and night watches. In fact, there were only seven men on duty at night, out of a total of 230 on board, when the fire started. If Captain Willmott tolerated this arrangement for his own reasons, nobody else was likely to make complaint.

Another astonishing feature of the way the ship was operated was that there was no list of rules, no book of company-regulations, to which an

officer could turn (if he did not already know them from long service) for guidance. This was so extraordinary that the question was put to the vice-president in charge of operations more than once. No, there were no printed regulations.

Allusion has already been made to the suspicion that Captain Warms, as chief officer, lacked the usual authority of that rank. Captain Willmott told his chief mate what to do. But when Captain Willmott suddenly was not there, the defects of his system became obvious enough. Right on down the line, to the stewards and bellhops who swarmed into a boat and rowed away, there was no company "principle" at work.

So, the skeptics may say, the ship caught fire because there was no principle, no discipline? They could not handle the fire because there was a lack of discipline? You want us to believe that?

We have the statement of the night watchman that he had so many other duties he could not do much watching. There were not enough men on duty to comply with the law. We may ask here, What sort of men? Who chose them for their work? What were their qualifications?

The Ward Line shipping master, the shore official who engaged the crews, a Greek gentleman, could neither read nor write English. If the

American discharges had been printed in Greek it may be doubted whether this modern Ulysses would have been any the wiser. Perhaps he spoke Cuban Spanish, for many of the deck hands were Cubans. We do not know. What we do know is that he was the employee of the Ward Line appointed to select the crews for American-flag ships, and the law of the land, to put it mildly, was interpreted in an elastic manner.

The general public is ill informed on the subject of lifeboats. Indignation surges up white hot when it transpires that lifeboats are not regularly lowered, operated, inspected, revictualled, and maintained. If you ask, When is this to be done?, there is a certain lack of unanimity in the answers. The ship ties up at her pier in New York. The boats on the dock side cannot be lowered. Neither can those on the off side, for the dock, as often as not, is full of lighters. The crew are mostly off their articles and will not rejoin until sailing morning. Is the chief officer supposed to do this job single-handed?

At the other end of the voyage it is not much better. You say, the law demands it. The ship should lie off in the river or the harbor, and go through boat inspection and drill.

It sounds quite simple. But in a world where ships are run to make money and keep schedules, and gov-

ernment subsidies are earned only on the number of sea-miles they cover, a world in which wages go on all the time and passengers are irked over an hour's delay, these are counsels of perfection. Lifeboats are heavy. Motor lifeboats are extremely heavy.

But boats are only part of the story. Those members of the crew, with their lifeboat certificates, are the main thing. With a personnel turnover of 20 per cent, what chance had the *Morro Castle* of boat crews trained and experienced? The answer is, She had no chance at all.

This accounts for the bizarre fact that Boat 3 got away with 16 of the crew, but no passengers. (She was certified to carry 70 persons.) Boat 1 went off with 3 passengers (evidently resourceful and agile fellows) and 29 of the crew. The general impression we gather from these facts is that the crew had only one thought in mind, which was to save their own skins, and there seemed to be nobody in command to correct that thought. The *Morro Castle* lay swathed in dense smoke and fumes, shot by the flames consuming the interior of the upper decks, while passengers, huddled by the after rail, dropped into the sea or shinnied down ropes. They saw the more resourceful members of the crew rowing away as hard as they could. This is one of the most terrible features of a terrible disaster. The

crew exhibited an ignoble panic. Many of them were despicable in their behavior.

Captain Warms followed the immemorial tradition of the sea by being the last man to leave the doomed ship. When the Coast Guard Cutter *Tampa* arrived, it was decided to tow the burning hulk to New York. Two tugs were in attendance, and the procession, moving slowly through heavy seas, reached Asbury Park, when the hawsers parted. The *Morro Castle* drifted broadside on a sand bar, a few yards off Convention Hall, at the foot of Sixth Avenue. Here she stuck fast. This was Saturday evening.

#### IV

All through the inquiry there ran a vein of hysteria, and another vein of stubborn though clandestine wishful thinking, to ascribe the *Morro Castle* fire to arson. There are four hundred pages of maritime laws in the Federal statute book, and one of them, the Harter Act, defines arson on a ship as "an act of God," thereby releasing the owners from civil liability.

Captain Warms, asked what motive would inspire anyone to sabotage the *Morro Castle* by arson, replied, "God knows what the motive was." Others, however, were less modest. It was all due to "Reds." Major Cayetano Fraga, head of the Havana detective

force, announced that a liquid-fire bomb was probably planted on the *Morro Castle* by Communists, members of a secret international maritime sabotage ring who shipped as members of the crews. Captain Oscar Hernandez, chief of Havana harbor police, was convinced that "Communists and terrorists" had set fire to the ship.

There were some witnesses, however, who were sane and contributed useful evidence. Mr. Tripp, the young MIT student already mentioned, impressed everybody with the clarity and honesty of his statements. There was no getting away from the bell-sheet, the log he kept of the orders coming down from the bridge. But he could let no light into the darkness surrounding the main question — What set the ship on fire?

It was discovered, you will recall, in a locker in the writing room, on B deck. This is the official explanation. Nobody seems to have questioned it for a moment. The writing room extended across the ship, part of it being known as the library. The funnel passed up through B deck at that point. Just forward of the funnel were the main first-class staircase and elevator, both of which were to act as flues for the fire. Above the boilers was the first-class dining room, with its mezzanine, then the lounge and ballroom, also with a mezzanine, and

then the writing room and library. Above these public rooms were state-rooms on either side, on A deck. The fact that the funnel passed through this passenger structure was not mentioned by anybody.

But it started in the locker, we are assured, and Captain Warms knew of it shortly before 3 A.M. The SOS went out at 3:15. At 3:29 the lights went out in the engine room, which was filling with smoke. Nobody inquired how smoke was getting through steel bulkheads from the writing room. Second Officer Hackney, promoted from third when Captain Willmott died, saw smoke coming *out* of the ventilators in the fiddley at 2:55. These must have been the fire-room ventilators, but Mr. Tripp assured him at that time that there was no fire in the engine room. Here is a point which should have been narrowly cross-examined by the board of inquiry.

Unsatisfactory as most of the witnesses were, there were two who not only agreed, and who were innocent of collusion, but whose evidence disposed of the sedulously cultivated fiction that the ship took fire with miraculous suddenness and was destroyed as if she were constructed of celluloid. One was a cruise passenger, Mr. John Kempf, by profession a city fireman of Maspeth, Long Island. He was an expert witness as regards

fires. The other was Harriet B. Brown, a stewardess. Mr. Kempf stated that he smelled smoke soon after midnight. Mrs. Brown confirmed this.

## v

Who, then, was to blame? It is a tradition in American transportation, deriving from the bad old days, when American railroads were less safe than now, to blame the engineer, who was generally dead. The Ward Line, however, did not have this consolation. Their engineer, Mr. Eben S. Abbott, was very much alive. (He had left in Number 1 boat.) Captain Warms stated that the engineer appeared on the bridge, suffering from smoke and fumes, and said he could do no more and was leaving the ship. We are told, by members of the crew in the boat, that the engineer took off the braid from his sleeves, with a view to preserving his anonymity when he got ashore.

Obviously such a tragic figure did not create a very favorable impression at the inquiry. His good fortune was that there was no one conducting the interrogations technically competent to ask leading questions.

There was no one, for instance, to correct the public notion that the chief engineer should have been "at his post" in the engine room. His post was on deck. So far as we know,

he was doing what he was supposed to do, supervising the fire-fighting equipment. We are told that he was ordered by the captain to abandon the ship, which might have a number of differing interpretations, but they would all be conjectures now.

Mr. Martin Conboy, United States Attorney, complained that the Ward Line's officials and lawyers did all they could to frustrate and interfere with the inquiry. The Ward Line's legal representatives denied the charge. In the opinion of the present writer the charge is not sustained. A defendant is not supposed to assist in his own indictment, and the Ward Line knew very well that they were, in the eyes of the public at any rate, defendants. The lawyers of a steamship line in trouble are perfectly justified in coaching the crew, not in what to say under oath, but in what not to say to reporters. Men who have just escaped a horrible death are not fit subjects for newspaper interviews.

The aim of the Ward Line was, of course, to evade responsibility. They did not succeed, because negligence was nakedly exposed. All we can be sure of now is that they would have created a better impression in the public mind if they had revealed common humanity toward the victims of that disaster. While they were collecting \$4,186,000 hull insur-

ance from Lloyd's, \$263,000 more than the ship's book value, they proposed to limit their liability to the value of the freight and passenger fares — around \$13,000 — plus the value of the ship, which was then nothing. A year after the tragedy, the claims of over four hundred survivors were still pending. Another Ward Liner, the *Mohawk*, had by that time made history by going mysteriously haywire while passing the tanker *Talisman*, and had been rammed and sunk. By September, 1936, the sum of \$890,000 was allocated to the *Morro Castle* case, and most of the claimants accepted the settlement.

The historian is left groping through the records for an answer to the original conundrum — What caused the fire? Why did a modern ship burn with such inconceivable rapidity? The reply at first was "arson." We were asked to believe that the criminal, with fiendish ingenuity, after poisoning the master, selected the locker in the writing room because (1) the writing room had no electric fire alarm, and (2) he knew the stewards kept illegal and inflammable polishing liquid in the locker (this was never established as a fact), and that (3) he chose the hour for his crime when most people on board were either drunk or asleep, or both.

This was the sensational yarn elaborated after the Red scare passed. Nobody asked the simple question, What was behind the writing room locker?

Like most modern, medium-sized, medium-speed steamers, the *Morro Castle* had only one real funnel. The after funnel was partly ornament, partly a ventilator. If, through neglect of the burners in the furnaces, the funnel base had become overheated, the heat would have been most intense where the funnel passed through the writing room, behind the cupboard. The writer once discovered his funnel red-hot just above the uptakes, owing to negligence. The ship was a freighter. There was a wide space between the funnel and the accommodation, and only minor damage ensued.

The validity of a theory is based on the number of observed facts it can account for. The present hypothesis assumes that parts of the steel structure around the funnel had been red-hot for hours and were charring the woodwork, disintegrating the insulation, giving off that smell of smoke which Mr. John Kempf and Mrs. Brown, the stewardess, declared they smelled soon after midnight. Remember that Mr. Hackney, the second officer, saw smoke coming up from the fire-room grating and inquired if there was a fire in the *engine* room, receiving a negative reply from Mr.



Tripp. Then, at three o'clock, according to Mr. Hackney, smoke was seen in the writing room, and the door of the locker burst open, belching flames.

Does anyone believe that a fire generated in a locker with steel bulkheads behind it could consume the ship with such speed? But if you assume that the interior structure of the funnel casing, passing up through the ship behind the writing room walls, had been reddening for hours (through negligence), sending the heat along the steel deckbeams, plates, and stanchions, then all was set for the holocaust.

Only a hypothesis, but it does attempt to explain something, which

the fumbling, prejudiced conjectures of the day did not.

The United States now has an enormous merchant marine. Nothing like the *Morro Castle* tragedy can ever happen again — ships will take fire on occasion, but there will never recur the staggering incompetence of that fatal Saturday in September 1934. Or so we hope. It depends on the public, which in the past has been quick to anger, quick to forgive, quick to forget, but slow to do anything about it. The lesson of the *Morro Castle* is so simple that it may quite possibly be misunderstood. It is that the price of a merchant marine, like the price of liberty, is eternal vigilance.

## DISENCHANTMENT

BY OLIVER EVANS

When I saw disenchantment in your eyes,  
Sad signs of autumn, I was desperate  
And cried No, no, I will not have it so  
And set myself to check your forward season,  
Thinking that even though I failed of that  
My ample summer should contain us both.  
Then woke one day to find my own sun done  
And frost upon the flowers of my feeling.

# WEST POINT—MYTH AND REALITY

BY WILLIAM HINES

**T**HE United States Corps of Cadets at West Point is a closely knit military formation of 2500 eager young men leading in regimented seclusion a life of streamlined medievalism and plush asceticism to the greater glory of the American Republic.

With the possible exception of the atomic bomb, there is probably no government property about which so much misinformation is circulating as the United States Military Academy. The school is not, as many folk believe, a vast foundry for the manufacture of curious effigies, half tin-soldier, half tin-god. It simply seems to be sometimes, because twentieth-century America has breezed on past West Point and the three things for which the Academy stands.

These things, to which West Point is officially dedicated, and to which its cadets are indoctrinated to aspire, are "Duty, Honor, Country." The Spartan code of discipline, the chivalric code of conduct, and the Decatur-

esque sense of patriotism ingrained in cadets, give the Military Academy a sort of never-never-land atmosphere.

It is, in reality, a materialistic microcosm whose only assets are "tenths" (academic marks equivalent to 3.33 per cent each). It is a spiritual world as well, where the cadets march to chapel each Sunday because they have to, and give every indication nevertheless of enjoying the weekly religious experience. It is a land where "all the brothers are noble and all the sisters are chaste," and all exceptions to this rule take place in carefully stipulated areas. It is a place about which the American public cherishes an Olympian ignorance, and perhaps just a little fear.

More than almost any college, the Military Academy is a creature of its own devising, an institution which grewed like Topsy and is still growing after 147 years of trial and error. To the person who looks upon the modern world as a hell of a place to be, and who wishes for a rollback to the

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**WILLIAM HINES** is a government publicist, who has no connection with West Point, but who was formerly Assistant Chief of News in the Department of the Army. He has written for the *MERCURY* and many other magazines. This is the fourth in a series on American colleges.

Good Old Days, a better world can be found at West Point. The class clubs have television sets now (New York is just within the horizon of a high antenna) and there are zippers on the coats and flies of the cadets' dress grays, but little else has changed since a down-east boy named Bryant Moore matriculated 35 years ago.

Moore is a major-general now, the superintendent of the Military Academy. He fought in both theatres in World War II and has been called everything from one of the great leaders of the war to "the very model of a modern major-general" in the Gilbert and Sullivan sense. He is an avowed conservative and traditionalist who says of West Point:

Our system . . . is unique. We don't do things . . . as they are done elsewhere. We cling strongly to what we believe are the basic qualities and principles that have produced the Spirit of West Point. We look upon West Point as an island of timeless, venerable, antique (if you will) and priceless military virtues in an uncertain and self-engrossed world.

Sylvanus Thayer, class of 1808, the first great "supe" of the Academy, decreed that in order to learn what the Point had to teach, each cadet should pursue the same course as all other cadets; there were to be no electives. He enunciated, too, the rule that ev-

ery cadet would recite in every class every day. The Military Academy has expanded many times over since Thayer's day, but with few exceptions the two dicta are followed.

Since Thayer there have been great superintendents, mediocre ones and one (Pierre G. T. de Beauregard) who stayed only five days. But the superintendency is what would have been called, in other times, other places, and with less work attached to it, a West Point sinecure. With the single exception of Jonathan Williams, who opened the Academy in 1802, all 38 supes have been alumni.

Some of the superintendents, like MacArthur in the early twenties and Maxwell Taylor immediately before the incumbent, have spurred West Point toward new horizons. In sum, however, little has been done to change West Point from what it was when Thayer left in 1833.

It is difficult to say who runs the Military Academy. Command is vested in the superintendent, but Moore hazards the guess that the Point runs the supe as much as vice versa. The Pentagon lays down "policy" for the Academy, but certainly does not run it. There is no unofficial clique of alumni exercising vast and invisible powers over the school. The Congress does not govern West Point, nor does the President.

So, by a process of elimination, one

comes to the conclusion that the Academic Board runs the Military Academy, runs (by moral suasion) the supe, and by extremely delayed action the Army as a whole. The Board is made up of professors, some civilian, some military, with the *ex officio* rank of colonel. Some members of the Board are virtually unknown, even to the Army, while others, like Herman Beukema, are acknowledged educational leaders.

The delayed action effect of the Academic Board on the Army as a whole works this way: the principles which govern West Point condition the men who, a generation hence, occupy the top military posts of the service. George Marshall of VMI is the sole exception in the last 35 years to the rule that all United States Army Chiefs of Staff are West Point graduates.

In any case, there seems to be nothing sinister about the power wielded by the Academic Board. If there is such a thing as the fabled "West Point Protective Association" — and it is hard to document the assertion that there is — the Academic Board is certainly not its directorate. The great advantage to West Point in having an Academic Board is that the group provides continuity to the leadership of the Academy. A single example would be Beukema, who has been at the Point for 21 years. In the

same period there have been seven superintendents.

As all plebes know by rote, it was General Winfield Scott's "fixed opinion" that —

but for our graduated cadets, the war between the United States and Mexico might, and probably would, have lasted some four or five years, with, in its first half, more defeats than victories falling to our share; whereas, in less than two campaigns, we conquered a great country and a peace, without the loss of a single battle or skirmish.

Winfield Scott's fixed opinion can be taken as an unbiased one. He was not a West Pointer.

## II

There are 340 lights in Cullum Hall, 2240 names on Battle Monument, and 92,200,000 gallons of water in Lusk Reservoir.

If the fresh skin of an animal, cleaned and divested of all hair, fat, and other extraneous matter, be immersed in a dilute solution of tannic acid, a chemical combination ensues; the gelatinous tissue of the skin is converted into a non-putrescible substance, impervious to and insoluble in water; this, Sir, is leather.

Plebes rank the Superintendent's dog, the Commandant's cat, the waiters in the Mess Hall, the Hell Cats, and all the admirals in the Navy.

These, and other facts are made known to the new cadets early in July, when a random sample of male American youth is sworn into the military service of the United States and enters "Beast Barracks."

This cadet indoctrination period is a collegiate hell-week extended to two months' duration, an Army basic training cycle of unimaginable intensity, and the new cadet's first exposure to Duty, Honor, Country — and to the Fourth Class Customs and Disciplines. It is a leveling-off phase, when the millionaire kid from Park Avenue meets the mill boy from Youngstown, when the Ivy League collegian encounters the GI dogface soldier, when the planter's son from South Carolina gets acquainted with the Negro from Detroit. It is a transition between the civilianism of last spring and the academic militarism of the coming autumn.

Whether the rigid "brace," the sirring of senior cadets, the unrelaxed attitude at mess, and the memorizing of such trivia as the number of lights in Cullum Hall, are instances of hazing is a question that could be argued forever. Officially, hazing is forbidden under pain of dismissal, and the Academy holds that the disciplines of Beast Barracks are not hazing procedures. Non-Pointers might be inclined to observe that you don't change a thing by changing its name, but in any case,

the plebe who has to take it doesn't seem to consider it hazing.

There was a time, not so long ago, when pretty severe hazing, by anyone's standards, did occur. Until even more recently, the discipline imposed on plebes was of a Prussian character, and searing insults were the bread and meat of a fourth-classman's life. Since the war, the approach to cadet indoctrination has become a psychological one. No longer is the new cadet ordered to "front those slimy green eyes, Mister," or told that he is the "grossest, most ignorant dumbjohn I have ever seen."

The psychological approach decrees that the traditions of West Point can and will be instilled in the plebe without his human dignity being taken away from him. It is not important *per se* that there are 340 lights in Cullum Hall, or that the plebe memorize this particular piece of useless information. But neither is it insulting to the plebe to learn it, and West Point thinks that through such disciplines the plebe will grow to leadership. The little gray-backed plebe bible puts it this way:

The purpose of the Fourth Class System . . . is two-fold: to provide a foundation upon which a Fourth Classman may develop the qualities essential to a good leader; to afford upper classmen the opportunity to perform practical work in leadership and ad-

ministration of subordinates. It is predicated upon the principle that no one is qualified to command who has not learned to obey.

Another of the inconsequential facts which help the plebe to "develop the qualities essential to a good leader" is that the girls are "all fickle but one and she is the Lady on Battle Monument." If the cadet were required also to know who posed for the Lady's statue, he would learn that the model was Evelyn Nesbit.

### III

There is supposed to be a certain naïveté about West Point cadets in their association with what are popularly called "femmes" and officially termed "young ladies." This is probably no more true of cadets than of other collegians. The cadet's liberty is considerably more restricted than is usual at college, but he is not required to take a vow of sexual abstinence — though from time to time he is asked to certify on his honor that he is unmarried. And if the limits which cadets with young ladies may tread are narrow ones, it is still historically true at West Point as elsewhere that the man who invented the chastity belt gave rise to the saying that love laughs at locksmiths.

At West Point, as at Siwash, the question of whether a man and a

maid carry their relationship beyond the necking stage is pretty much up to the individuals concerned. The cadet barracks are off limits to femmes and the upper floors of the Hotel Thayer to cadets, but the forested areas adjoining Flirtation Walk and the hills behind Michie Stadium are among the places where one does not take his femme if her mother is up with her for the week end.

West Point "drags" are, like the cadets they visit, normally healthy and attractive young persons. The typical femme is the sort of girl one would expect to find at any good college dance. She is admittedly putting on the dog a little, for there is prestige in being a West Point drag. She may be a trifle self-conscious, and perhaps her strapless evening gown will fit her a bit better in two or three years, but she has a good time within the limitations of early — and alone — to bed and to rise.

Occasionally, upperclassmen get away for a week end, but a spree in New York costs \$50 or more, and the cadet pay of \$936 a year is pretty much needed for other things. Outside the 25-mile "cadet limits" around West Point, a cadet can drink when off duty. Superintendent Moore is toying with the idea of placing a ban on drinking in uniform anywhere, any time. West Point being what it is, if the rule is made it will be obeyed, but

it will certainly not be a popular one.

The West Point week end, the spree in New York, the question of to booze or not to booze, are all of extreme unimportance alongside the day-by-day purposefulness of cadet life. Few collegians elsewhere, midshipmen excepted, carry the tremendous work load at the dead-run pace which cadets maintain.

The Academy administration is ruthless in its application of the principle that cadets are the beneficiaries of the public bounty. To be appointed to the Military Academy is the equivalent of receiving a \$20,000 scholarship leading to a permanent well-paying job and a \$5000 annuity after 30 years of service. Few colleges offer such stipends, and those that do hand them out only to the most highly qualified men.

But West Point does not cater to genius, so it loads the work mercilessly on its students and bids them sink or swim. About one fourth of an incoming class sinks before graduation, in more-than-geometrically decreasing proportions as the years go by. James McNeill Whistler and Edgar Allan Poe are among the "foundlings," as West Point calls them, the cadets who fail of graduation. In the military field, a notable foundling was Courtney Hodges, who flunked math and reached the climax of his career nevertheless as commander of the

U. S. First Army in World War II.

The 600 or 700 plebes who report each year are probably not much above or below the average college freshman in any respect. The academic curriculum, however, is as taxing as any undergraduate course in the country. To make matters worse, the schoolbook courses are only a part of West Point life. Tactics (a catchall for every non-classroom course) make up a sizable part of the instruction all cadets receive.

Unlike most schools, West Point requires passing marks in all studies not only for graduation but even for continued attendance. A grade of 3.0 is perfect and 2.0 is passing, and final marks are determined by complex business machines. Quite aside from the sense of honor which undoubtedly would deter West Point authorities from toying with the grades of any student, such chicanery would probably be mechanically impossible.

#### IV

A common complaint heard from West Point instructors is that the Academy does not always get the best men who each year want to get in. This is due to admission procedures, established by Congress, which give congressmen the right to designate about 85 per cent of the candidates for West Point's validating exam. A legislator can name a princi-



pal and three alternates to take the exam, but the catch is that the exam is non-competitive. If the principal fulfills the Point's minimum requirements, he is accepted; none of the alternates even gets a crack at the test unless the principal flunks.

As might well be imagined, an appointment to the Academy is a juicy plum for a legislator to have in his baksheesh bag. While some congressmen name candidates strictly on a merit basis, many of them designate the sons of deserving hacks back home, and the story persists in Washington of one lawgiver who openly peddled cadetships, cash on the barrel-head.

The Military Academy is pretty far back in the hills, but not far enough back to believe that Congress would hold still for a proposition which would deprive congressmen of the right to designate cadets. Many solutions for the improvement of the Corps have been advanced, both at West Point and elsewhere. One rather cynically calls for giving the congressman as many as eight or ten plums. For each vacancy the legislator could name a number of candidates, thus paying off old debts, and the selection of the successful entrant would be made *by West Point* on the basis of what West Pointers consider aptitude for cadetship.

Academy officials believe not only

that such a method of selection would help to raise the standards of the Corps of Cadets, but that it would place a more truly representative segment of the national population in the Academy. Starry-eyed commentators on West Point make much of the circumstance that about the same ratio of Catholics to Protestants exists in the Corps as in the nation. Ergo, the cadets are representative of the people from whom they are drawn. Such hit-or-miss logic fails to take into consideration the fact that in the 1949 academic year there were only nine Negroes in the entire Corps.

Still, the disparity here is primarily the fault of Congress rather than of the Academy. As an illustration, about the only way for a Negro from the South to get into West Point would be for his congressman to wish to express his contempt for the United States Army.

For an evaluation of anti-Negro feeling, probably one of the best places to go would be to a white Southern cadet. Says one:

You know the kind of upbringing I had — you don't talk to a Negro on the street, you don't associate with him. That was why it was a surprise to me to have to work with Negroes here. The way I look at it now is, he went through Beast Barracks and so did I. He's as good a man as I am and that is what counts.

It would be only fair to say, for the benefit of those who wish to post a debit in the Academy's racial ledger, that as a rule Negroes room with Negroes, and whites with whites. This is said to be a matter of choice on the part of individual cadets, and it is true that cadets have some leeway in selecting their roommates.

Strangely enough, the group which seems to encounter the greatest amount of "discrimination" at the hands of fellow-cadets is the "Army brat" bloc, the sons of high-ranking Army officers. In no uncertain manner, new cadets with names linking them to the brass are given to understand that they are no better than the rest of the plebes in Beast Barracks — and maybe not quite so good.

From time to time, the comment is made that the Army is in danger of becoming dominated by a Junker caste of West Point sons of West Point fathers. To date, after 147 years of West Point, this appears to be a case of looking for burglars under the bed. West Pointers strive to get their sons into the Academy with about the same regularity that any alumnus sends his boy to Alma Mater. West Pointers have a particularly overweening love for the old school and at least a normal desire to have the son follow in the father's footsteps. In some cases the desire is definitely a good thing: it would

have been a loss to the United States in World War II, for instance, had Captain Alexander Patch, '77, not sent his namesake son to the Point in 1909.

v

It is obvious, as one highly placed West Pointer once said, that "there has been an awful lot of b.s. written about this place." This descent to scatology is justified by the section of the Academy's library stacks which is devoted to published works on West Point. Much of this literature is of the inspirational, nauseating Jack Armstrong type, "for boys from nine to ninety." Such books were, in great part, written by West Pointers, self-appointed apologists, and published at periods when the Academy was under criticism.

In general, in the laudatory writings, the author is quite carried away by the force of his theme: the glory of West Point. In other cases the cause of the misinformation is plainly and simply *diarrhoea styli*: for example, William H. Baumer, in *West Point: Moulder of Men* (Appleton, 1942) one of the better popular books on the Academy, makes a point at the expense of accuracy by saying, "James McNeill Whistler, some years after his graduation, was disgusted when he heard that the cadets were playing football." Whistler is a graduate only

by the tenderest courtesy; he flunked out after three years. As will be shown later, *cacoethes scribendi* attacks alumni especially when they write about the Honor System.

Another part of the misinformation that has been dispensed about West Point comes from opponents and has to do with the military mind. This portion of the literature makes the point that the Academy turns out graduates as Kaiser turns out cars, with all individuality removed and each one exactly like the next. If this were actually the case, it would seem to follow that the only differentiation would be reflected in class standing, and that high station in the Army would regularly go to cadets who stood high on the graduation rolls. As a matter of record, only two outstandingly high-ranking cadets appear among the nation's top military heroes: Lee, No. 2 in the Class of 1829, and MacArthur, No. 1 in 1903.

Grant was twenty-first among 39 in 1843; Sherman, sixth of 42 in 1840. Pershing stood thirtieth among 77 in 1886; Bradley and Eisenhower ranked respectively forty-fourth and sixty-first in a class of 164 in 1915. Custer was *last* in his class in 1861. On the basis of such information, West Point authorities say simply "there is no telling" from his scholastic record how a cadet will fare in his later life.

Whatever West Point does to a man, it does not seem to mold him into any particular shape. It would be hard to find the "typical West Pointer," either 30 days or 30 years after graduation. If George Patton is to be taken as the West Point norm, one is hard put to decide how to classify Omar Bradley.

While they are at the Academy, West Pointers differ from one another much as they do in later life. Civilians who type cadets as humorless, diffident kids usually do so on the basis of a chance encounter with one or two of that stripe. It would be aseasy to find raucousextroverts. Some cadets quietly participate in inter-collegiate chess matches. Others take part in the wild buffoonery of Hundredth Night, the annual stage presentation of the "Dialectic Society." They stack up, as a group, about as any student body.

One of the greatest popular misconceptions about West Point has to do with its honor system. The All-American Boy school of literature is mostly to blame for the idea that the Pointer is a knight in shining armor whose every move from reveille to taps is regulated by exaggerated ideas of honor. When it is evaluated objectively, the West Point Honor System is obviously an influence for good in young men, and therefore a noble and inspiring thing. It begins to be a

little unbelievable and ridiculous only when it is sentimentalized and sanctified by those who, through experience, should know better.

General Eisenhower stated recently that "everyone familiar with West Point would instantly agree that the one thing that has set us definitely aside from *every other school in the world* is the fact that for a great number of years it has not only had an Honor System but that the System has actually worked." [My emphasis — W. H.] Such a statement can hardly be supported by facts: the University of Virginia, as a single and not isolated example, has had a working honor system for a century.

There are various reasons for the honor systems that exist in colleges. All are based on the theory that the average American is basically honest; that he will not lie, cheat, steal or take undue advantage of his fellows. Virginia's well known system seems to stem from the old tradition of the "Southern gentleman." West Point's had its roots, at least in large part, in the chivalric tradition of the profes-

sion of arms, though there is evidence too that the Army's ancient and now superseded promotion-by-seniority system had much to do with its establishment.

West Point's honor system is not foolproof; it does not invariably screen out the liars, the thieves and the knaves. A very small number of West Pointers have even gone to prison. But certainly the Academy man's ideas of honesty and honor are more lofty than those of the average American, or, to put it another way, there is less chance of having your pocket picked in the Army & Navy Club than in the subway.

The Corps of Cadets has many prides and many traditions. High among the things of which the Corps is proud is the fact that the only traitor whose name has ever been associated with West Point was Major General Benedict Arnold, whose very name and date of death have been eradicated from a plaque honoring Revolutionary War generals. And Arnold, of course, never attended the Academy.



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## THE SKEPTICS' CORNER

by BERGEN EVANS

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### *That snakes are slimy*

Among the millions who have an aversion to snakes, and therefore have never handled them, there is a belief that they are slimy. Cleopatra, in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, perceived "an aspic's trail" on the fig leaves: "these fig leaves have slime upon them, such as the aspic leaves upon the caves of Nile." No doubt in her innocence she was confusing a snake with a snail, a confusion shared by Lord Byron and divers other bards.

Snakes are hard, smooth, dry and clean.

### *That Negroes endure heat better than whites do*

Statistics compiled by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company show that the rate of death from heat prostration is six times as high among Negroes as among whites.

The often-heard assurance that

Negroes "don't feel the heat" is, obviously, a functional delusion. It is a conscience-soother, a pity-deadener, a responsibility-evader.

We don't hear that Eskimos endure cold better than whites. But if a large number of Eskimos were economically oppressed in cold regions and suffered from lack of adequate clothing and housing, we would be sure to be told not to concern ourselves because "Eskimos don't mind the cold."

### *That wolves often attack men*

While it seems highly probable that wolves have at some time or other attacked unarmed men — since they will attack caribou which are much more formidable — yet the astonishing fact remains that authentic instances of an unprovoked attack on a man by a wolf are almost unknown, despite scores of stories of such attacks. Young and Goldman, in *The Wolves of North America*, say

that "in the 25 years that the Fish and Wildlife Service has aided in cooperative wolf control, no incidents [of such attack] have come to the notice of the Service or of any of its personnel." The Stanwell-Fletchers, in *Driftwood Valley*, say that the Indians respect the wolves but aren't much afraid of them: "They can cite no cases of men having been attacked by wolves."

*That men have been instantaneously frozen to death in grotesque positions*

There are many astonishing stories of the effects of extreme cold. In the terrible winter of 1708, we are frequently told, birds froze on the wing and dropped stiff to the ground. Travelers from the North sometimes tell of saliva "exploding" as it left their mouths and striking the ground as ice.

The most remarkable use of this lore in recent times was the sensational story, carried by all American and English newspapers in January and February, 1940, of the Russian soldiers who "froze as they fell" and "stiffened into queer positions of death" as the Finnish machine guns mowed them down.

It was front-page stuff and there were plenty of supporting photographs to silence the incredulous,

though it was grimly amusing to note the different interpretations put upon the same picture by the American and British temperaments. Thus a photograph of a corpse with outstretched arms was described in the American papers as that of a telegraph linesman shot as he was in the act of stringing a wire, while in the English papers the same corpse was said to have been engaged in his daily devotions — a rather astonishing activity for a Russian, unless, of course, he was pleading for mercy.

The whole value attached to the photographs, indeed, lay in the newspapers' interpretation of them. There were several corpses, pathetic and grotesque in their stiffness. How they got that way could have been anybody's guess. Perhaps they were wounded men who had bunched themselves into holes or small shelters for warmth and frozen in their cramped postures. Perhaps two men had clutched each other for mutual warmth and had been separated after freezing to death, each with arms outstretched in an empty embrace.

Whatever had happened, the one thing that had *not* happened was that which the papers alleged. The men had not frozen instantaneously because it is a physical impossibility for a man — or even a beetle — to freeze in any such manner.

And later on it came to light that

the correspondents who had, presumably, been eye-witnesses of these gruesome spectacles had actually never left their hotel rooms in Helsinki. Leland Stowe, whose name is most prominently associated in the public mind with the Russo-Finnish war, wrote in *Editor and Publisher* (at the very time his stories were appearing in the daily press): "I have never been within hearing distance either of rifle or artillery fire."

*That the umbrella is a recent invention*

The belief, fostered by a recent series of advertisements for life insurance, that the umbrella is a bold innovation of the modern world, received another setback with the discovery of umbrellas in the Mayan fresco paintings recently unearthed at Bonampak, the most impressive of Mayan "Old Empire" ruins.

Not that any such discovery was needed. Umbrellas were used in Nineveh and Ancient Egypt.

*That hot tea is cooling*

That hot tea is cooling is more of an English fallacy than an American, though many Americans are adopting it, and may, perhaps, be excused on the grounds that the need to cool off is so rare in England that the inhabit-

ants are vague as to its exact nature.

Hot tea, like any hot drink, causes the drinker to sweat and the evaporation of the sweat may make him feel cooler for a short while, but at the best he is merely cooling down to the temperature he was before.

*That men formerly did as they pleased with their own*

Harassed businessmen, resentful of the government's continual interference with their attempts to turn an honest dollar, have allowed themselves to imagine a happier past when this was not so.

Actually it may be doubted that there has ever been a time or place at which any considerable number of people were permitted the untrammelled use of their property. In Rome there were definite statutes limiting a man's right to tear down a building, for example, unless it were ruinous or he intended to build a new one on the same site. Feudalism was based on the assumption that the land was held in return for certain services and every manor was, in a way, a commune.

And until late in the seventeenth century the minutiae of everyday business were governed with restrictions that would drive a modern entrepreneur nuts. In fact — though the thought won't comfort him any



— he probably has more freedom of action today than at almost any other period in history.

*That Jesus is a unique name*

Visitors to South America a generation ago were amused or scandalized at an advertisement which depicted Christ and all of the apostles except Judas smoking a popular brand of cigarette. And then as now they were continually encountering Jesus as an ordinary name, like Tom, Dick or Harry. The ad seemed sacrilegious and the name left them at least uneasy.

Yet Jesus is a common name, even in the Bible. There are thirteen Jesuses, in variant spellings, in the Old Testament and four of them in the New.

*That New York City is un-American and immoral*

Readers of the Chicago *Tribune* know well that New York is not spiritually a part of the United States. It is frequently described as "oriental" and is known to be inhabited by a horde of dark-skinned, sub-human emigrants and other riff-raff whose lives notoriously fail to exemplify the old American virtues. Family life is virtually unknown among them. Up-state New York, on the other hand, the fair flesh in which this

hideous cancer grows, is rural and therefore very American.

In the face of this it is puzzling to learn from the census figures that New York has one of the lowest divorce rates of any large city in the country, lower than Catholic Baltimore, lower than mid-western St. Louis. It even has a lower rate than the rural areas of New York state!

*That exercise rests the mind*

Jonathan Swift used to interrupt his studies every two hours to run a mile up and down hill. Lyman Beecher had a load of sand dumped in his cellar that he might relax from his lucubrations by shoveling it from one side of the room to the other. Both reverend gentlemen shared the common belief that physical exercise rests the mind.

At bottom this idea rests on the old duality of mind and body and the assumption that they are at strife; it is only when the body (the flesh, the devil) is subdued that the mind (the soul) can expatiate.

Actually, it just adds one fatigue to another. Exercise offers diversion, of course, and the belief that it's good for us supplies moral justification for indulging in it. But rarely after severe exercise does anyone feel like going back to any work involving concentration of thought.

## OUR COMIC-OPERA HOOSEGOWS

BY JOSEPH FULLING FISHMAN

"SHA'FF," called a prisoner in one of the small county jails of South Carolina, "don't yo'all think hit's just about time Ah was gitting mah spring plowin' done?"

"Ah reckon so, Pete," responded the sheriff, and then jokingly, "Guess yo'all 'lowin' to plant co'n agin, huh?"

"Wal," Pete drawled, "Ah ain't sayin' Ah ain't, an' they ain't no revenooers a goin' to git me this time, either, 'cause Ah got a place they ain't none o' them can git to."

"How long yo'all reckon it'll take to do yo' plowin'?" the sheriff inquired.

"Wal, 'bout two or three weeks to git things into shape," responded Pete, after thinking for a moment or two. "If Ah left to-night Ah could git back 'bout the fu'st o' the month."

"All right, Pete," said the sheriff, "yo'all light out to-night and git back soon's ever yo' kin."

So Pete "lit out" that same night, completed his spring plowing, and

returned to jail promptly on the first of the following month to finish out his sentence of ninety days, not counting the time he had been away. He brought the sheriff back a gallon of moonshine fresh from the still. But it was in no sense graft or bribery.

The sheriff had acted out of a sense of good fellowship alone, and even had he known that Pete would return empty-handed he would have let him go. Nor had he any uneasiness about his prisoner returning. He had given his promise and that was sufficient, as the sense of honor among the "hill-billies" makes breaking a promise the most heinous of crimes, alongside of which shooting a "revenooer" or two is but a mild misdemeanor.

This practice of allowing prisoners to go home during intervals of their supposed confinement in jail exists to a considerable extent in the smaller jails of the United States. It isn't done secretly. It isn't something which the jailer, who in the smaller counties is also sheriff, would not want to have

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generally known. Far from it. In many cases he uses it as a campaign issue to insure his reelection. In his political speeches he will tell the voters that, if he is elected, no man need have his "craps sp'iled" for lack of attention merely because he happens to be serving a jail sentence for making moonshine.

This is no stage comic-opera. It is life's own, being played today in various mountain communities of these United States. In these districts, the population of entire counties is divided into three classes: those who make moonshine, those who drink it, and those who do both. Each is naturally very tolerant of the shortcomings of the others. Indeed, I have come across more than one official of the "co't," such as a sheriff or bailiff, who had himself been a moonshiner or liquor runner. Such facts are never brought forward by his political opponents. It may be all right in a large city for the pot to refer in uncomplimentary terms to the complexion of the kettle, but in a smaller community, where everyone knows you, it is something else again.

In these communities, the moonshiner, despite half a dozen jail terms, is received everywhere as a social equal. While a "prisoner," he "sets in" with the sheriff and his family at meal times, gets exactly the same food, plays around with the sheriff's chil-

dren, maybe takes a walk to town to "git hisself a plug o' chewin'," and generally conducts himself as a temporary member of the sheriff's household.

When the sheriff goes to the Saturday night "box supper" he is just as likely as not to take his prisoners along, and it doesn't worry him a bit if one of them is missing for a day or two undergoing repairs, following a claim — and proof — by someone else that he could lick any man in the country. He knows that he will show up in due course and will expect to have the time he was away added to his sentence.

## II

These moonshiners are of course Federal prisoners, and the government has tried for years to break up the practice of permitting them to go and come as they please while they are supposed to be serving jail sentences. When I was Inspector of Prisons for the Federal government, I used to "swoop down" unexpectedly on the sheriffs of these counties and check up on the United States prisoners supposed to be in jail.

I once made such a visit to the jail at Jackson, Kentucky. Jackson is in "Bloody Breathitt" county, the scene of the Curtis-Jett feuds. The jailer was an old mountaineer by the name of Allen, who was nicknamed "Smoky"

by the prisoners. The list showed 40 prisoners undergoing sentence, and I found the 40 everywhere — everywhere, that is, but in the jail. They were lolling around the jail yard, lounging in front of the town hotel, sitting in the courtroom regaling themselves with the spicy histories of others about to join their ranks, and generally enjoying themselves in the way peculiar to the “hill-billy.” Smoky was standing in the jail yard. I approached him and inquired why it was that the Federal prisoners were not in jail where they belonged. He looked me over meditatively:

“Ah ain’t seein’ as how the guv’mint’s got any kick,” he drawled, “bein’ as they’s a guard with a gun watchin’ ’em.”

“But where is he?” I inquired. “These men are all over town. Where is the guard?”

“He’s yander on t’other side of the jail,” came the surprising explanation.

“But,” I argued, as tactfully as possible, “if he’s on the *other* side of the jail how can he watch the men on *this* side? I know you mountaineers are supposed to have good eyesight, but I don’t think you can see through three or four stone walls and around corners.”

Smoky eyed me sadly, slowly turned the problem over in his deliberate mind, spat a mouthful of

tobacco juice out on the grass, carefully wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and delivered himself of just four words:

“Wal, this one kin.”

The explanation failed to satisfy. I told Smoky that unless the prisoners were kept in jail where they belonged they would be removed to another county, and he would lose the income for their board which he received from the government.

Just as he gave me his promise a “prisoner” who had been lounging around the yard strolled up to him and said:

“Lemme have the key, Smoky.”

Smoky handed him *the key to the jail*. The man walked over to it, unlocked the door, let himself in, locked it after him, and in a few minutes appeared at a second floor window and threw the key down to Smoky, who nonchalantly picked it up as though nothing at all unusual had happened.

This habit of the jailer being a “good fellow” with the prisoners is not always confined to the smaller towns. I have seen it on several occasions in cities. An amusing incident of the kind occurred in one of the large cities of the West. Having heard that the jailer was permitting two or three of his favorites to wander around the city as they wished, I had the jail watched until I was sure one of them had left.

Then, after having an official of the

United States Marshal's office pick him up and hold him in the "cage" at the Federal Building, I went to the jail to check up, without, however, telling the jailer what I had done. The wandering prisoner happened to be a local politician named Innott, who, since he was also something of a musician, had been nicknamed "Bugles." After talking to the jailer for a short time about different matters, I told him I wanted to speak to Innott. He gave me a startled look, said "Wait a minute," and disappeared. He returned in a few minutes with a prisoner, saying "This is Innott." Of course I differed with him, and when I explained that Innott was in the cage at the Marshal's office, his face registered an interesting mixture of amazement and dismay.

The action of the sheriff in permitting his friend Bugles to roam around outside the jail leaked out following the investigation. The newspapers on the opposite side of the political fence played it up in various ways in an endeavor to make campaign capital out of it, and the sheriff was severely criticized for his favoritism. But in a few days, the coincidence of the prisoner's name began to appeal to the newspapermen's sense of humor, and the affair became more of a joke than anything else. A prisoner sent this anonymous contribution to one of the local columnists:

Our jail presents a curious case;  
If fifty men are in the place  
And there is added one new face  
There'd still be fifty in it.

For Sheriff Clancy's very slick  
At modernized arithmetic,  
He's shown us how to do the trick  
With Mr. "Bugles" Innott.

This Innott is the sheriff's pet,  
Conviction doesn't make *him* fret,  
He hasn't been in jail as yet  
And ever will be in it.

For "Bugles" knows what he's about,  
And this is sure; without a doubt  
He's in it soft because he's out,  
And out because he's Innott.

### III

Many curious and amusing situations are presented by these comic-opera jails. Once when I was making an investigation of the jails of West Virginia a prisoner complained bitterly that he had caught a bad cold through being forced by the jailer to remain out in the rain all night. He said that the jailer had given him permission to return to his home for a few hours — no uncommon thing in some of these small institutions — and that he had promised to come back promptly at ten o'clock. He didn't arrive until eleven, after the jailer had retired.

He rang the bell, but the jailer refused to come down and let him in. He kept insisting that the train had

been late and that his failure to arrive on time had been due to no fault of his own. The institution was about a mile from the railroad station, a cold rain was falling, and he had been soaked to the skin.

He thought of the nice warm jail, and determined to get in at all costs. So he walked down the road to where some workmen were repairing a culvert, procured a crowbar, came back to the jail, pried two of the flimsy bars apart, raised the window and crawled through. "And then," he said bitterly, "what you t'ink 'Snakes' (the jailer) done?"

I professed ignorance.

"I tell you what he done," he went on. "He heard the noise and come down and when he seen what I done he makes me crawl back t'rough de winder and out in de rain agin, and I hadda walk to town to git a flop, and I ketches a bad cold, and when I tells Snakes about it he gives me hell for wakin' him up and says he's sorry it wasn't snowin', and when I got my time in I'm gonna see de county c'mishn'rs an' see if they stan' fer a poor con bein' treated dat way."

Several other prisoners had gathered around us to listen to the conversation. "Yeah, Snakes is hard-boiled all right," one of them spoke up. "He did something like that to that fellow who went out last January; what was his name?"

"Goldstein," suggested another.

"Yeah, that's the one. Goldie was going out on the nineteenth, but Snakes took five days away from him for sockin' Blooch when he caught him playing with marked cards. That made his time out on the twenty-fourth. Goldie said he was going to make a kick on the place, about the chow and everything, soon's he got out, an' Snakes had it in for him. So when the big snow came on the twenty-second Snakes told Goldie he was giving him back two days of the time he lost, which would make him out on the twenty-second, and he turned him out in the snow.

"Goldie sure put in one kick, said he'd been a bad actor and deserved to lose five days, and that his time wasn't up until the twenty-fifth, and that Snakes didn't have no right to turn him out. But Snakes showed him the rule where he could take away or give back any 'copper' he wanted, not exceeding five days a month, so there wasn't anything for Goldie to do but to hit the grit. He sure was one mad baby."

The comic-opera features of these backwoods counties are not always confined to the jails and jailers. Often the roots go back to the other county officials, and they are as likely as not to reach even the county judge, who might be assumed to be a person of some dignity. Going through a jail

deep in the recesses of Oklahoma on one occasion, I was startled to see a prisoner inside the cage in his underwear. Inquiry of the jailer, a typical back-county countryman, brought forth the following story:

This prisoner was a member of a gang of tramps which had been loitering around the county seat for some time. There had been a series of petty thefts, so the sheriff arrested this gang and brought its members to trial. He acted more upon suspicion than anything else, as he had decidedly little evidence. The local judge, whose house had been among those robbed, was an Irishman by the name of Fogarty. When the prisoners came to trial they had no counsel to defend them, so the judge assigned a life-long friend of his, one Charley Evans, to protect their interests.

After the evidence was in, Charley, who was very conscientious, arose and began an impassioned speech about the innocence of his clients, contending quite truthfully that the evidence was entirely insufficient to convict. He had barely got started when Judge Fogarty motioned to him to come up to the bench. He leaned over and drawled:

"You can finish that speech, Charley, but I'm going to convict them."

Charley was amazed. He knew that the judge ordinarily was inclined to be fair, erring if at all on the side of

leniency. It struck him that some kind of a joke was being played on him.

"You don't really mean that, judge?" he whispered.

Judge Fogarty shook his head obstinately. "That's exactly what I mean, Charley, I'm goin' to convict them."

"But, judge," protested Charley, "the evidence against them is so slight it's ridiculous."

Judge Fogarty nodded in the direction of one of the defendants. "Charley," he said bitterly, "you see that beetle-browed scoundrel next to the end, the one they call 'Hungry Joe'?"

Charley nodded.

"Well," the judge went on vindictively, "that rascal has my pants on."

The prisoners went to jail and Judge Fogarty immediately appeared and demanded his trousers back. The jailer protested bitterly, contending that it was not in keeping with the dignity of his institution for prisoners to be running around without any trousers on. But the judge insisted, so there was nothing else for the jailer to do.

Under a county ordinance, the jailer could put in a requisition for clothing for any prisoner whose attire transgressed the bounds of custom, providing that the prisoner himself did not have any money with which to purchase it.



This the jailer did immediately after the judge's departure with the highly prized trousers. But the ordinance also provided that such requisitions had to be approved by the county judge. When, therefore, the requisition came before Judge Fogarty for approval, he purposely withheld action for five or six days before consenting to approve it. It was during this interval that I happened to visit the jail.

#### IV

The lack of adequate supervision in the comic-opera jail belt often has startling consequences. In cases where the jailer is engaged in other occupations on the side, he gives to his institution only such time as he can actually spare; and in many instances this is practically none at all. Very often, indeed, he will not go near the jail for two or three days at a time, but will give full charge to a "trusty." I have been in many jails where such a prisoner would go to town to buy food, cook and serve it to the other prisoners, enforce discipline, and generally "run things" as though he himself were the jailer.

In one of these hoosegows there was a Negro prisoner known as "Applejack," who was serving a term of three months for petty theft. Like so many small jails, it was of flimsy construction, and Applejack was not

in it a week before he found his way to the outside through a large, unused sewerage pipe, from which he had removed a grating. The jailer had a farm several miles from town, on which he spent most of his time. His wife served the meals, the last one about four-thirty in the afternoon. A prisoner going out at night, therefore, would not be likely to be missed until the following morning.

Applejack, who had some native shrewdness, looked at this situation from all angles, and decided that here indeed was an opportunity to lay in a supply of other people's goods and chattels with a minimum of danger to himself. So each night he would let himself out of the jail after the town had gone to bed, which was about ten o'clock, and return again at one or two in the morning. The citizens began to complain of petty thefts and to look for the culprit. But, as Applejack had shrewdly figured out, they never thought of looking into the jail. A jailed thief, like a dead Indian, was looked upon as harmless.

At the end of three or four weeks, Applejack had accumulated a not insignificant quantity of clothing and silverware, not to mention a miscellaneous assortment of bric-a-brac and various odds and ends. These he hid in a closet in the jail which was used to store disinfectants, extra blankets and other jail paraphernalia. He intended

to carry this loot away after he was released by crawling back into the jail several times and removing on each occasion as much as he could carry.

He did succeed in carrying away the majority of it when another prisoner "squealed" on him and he was caught. He was indicted and convicted on two counts, one being for "breaking and entering into the jail of the aforesaid county and removing therefrom various articles of jewelry and wearing apparel hereinbefore listed." So the sewer pipe was closed, and Applejack went back for a considerably longer stay.

The so-called "trusties" whom many of these small county jailers leave in charge during their absence, are not always, as can well be imagined, particularly faithful to their trust. Some of them conduct a thriving trade in liquor and narcotics with the other prisoners. Some go even further. I recall one bootlegger who looked upon his enforced confinement as a mere incident which should not be allowed to interfere with business. This financial genius constructed a neat little dis-

tilling plant in his cell, making the coil or worm, such as is used by distillers, out of tin cups cut into strips and soldered together.

Raw materials were procured and the finished product sold each day when he went to town to procure the jail supplies. He carried the bottles attached to a belt around his waist under his overcoat. Business continued good until one day the jailer happened to run across him in town. The day was warm and the prisoner was perspiring freely, but he still wore his overcoat. Even an indifferent jailer could see that something was wrong, and the liquidation of the liquid business followed immediately after.

Once, when I was very young, I witnessed a vaudeville sketch in which a jail was so luxuriously conducted, with wine, women and gambling among the entertainment, that the inmates protested bitterly when they were forced to leave at the expiration of their terms. I thought this was too ridiculous and far-fetched for words.

But I don't think so now.



# COMSTOCK: CRUSADER AGAINST SIN

BY ALAN HYND

WHEN a book is banned in Boston, a painting seized in St. Louis, or a theatrical performance raided or toned down in New York, Anthony Comstock, the greatest blue-nose of them all, has metaphorically risen from the grave. Although his return to dust — an event unaccompanied by national lamentation — occurred a third of a century ago, Comstock still imposes his own bleak prejudices on our daily lives. As the father of censorship, he either wrote, or brow-beat legislators into writing, Federal, state and municipal vice statutes that are still on the books today. Largely as a result of Comstock's lingering influence, the facts of life are carefully withheld from motion-picture and radio audiences. In New York, a supposedly enlightened state, it is still a felony to disseminate birth-control information, either in writing or by word of mouth, even to a woman who would be killed by further child-bearing, because Anthony Comstock wanted it that way. It is the Comstockian influence that supplies trac-

tion for such latter-day mid-Victorian outfits as the Boston Watch and Ward Society.

From the early seventies to the first world war, Comstock, a forbidding bewhiskered giant in funereal black, boiled shirt and high silk hat, stalked through art galleries, theatres, publishing plants, brothels, police stations and courtrooms, and across cartoonists' drawing boards, a symbol of the prudery and fanaticism of the Victorian era. In 43 years as a professional reformer, he destroyed almost one hundred and seventy-five tons of literature, much of it unquestionably obscene, some of it, by impartial opinion, obscene only to a person ridden by frustrations and inhibitions.

As the arbiter of the nation's reading matter, whether it was in books, periodicals or newspapers, Comstock brought something less than a scholarly background to his work. His private reading was confined almost strictly to the Bible, in which, curiously enough, he particularly admired the Songs of Solomon, and to news-

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paper accounts of his own forays against evil. He never read the classics for the simple reason that he never understood them. Once, when looking upon a page of old English in Chaucer, he actually thought he had come upon a foreign language.

Comstock never attended the theatre, which he considered a contaminating place. He was, nevertheless, as the Secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, a self-appointed one-man theatrical censor board. He haunted the lobbies of the Manhattan playhouses, looking at pictures of actresses for periods of time many thought longer than necessary for the function of his official duties; then retired to a grimy cubbyhole down in the financial district, there, by his own admission, to feverishly imagine the actresses in unsuccessful struggles for their honor, if any.

When, in 1905, Comstock learned that Arnold Daly, the celebrated actor-manager, was about to put on a play by Bernard Shaw called *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, he wrote to Daly, asking what Mrs. Warren's profession was. Daly replied that it was prostitution. He suggested that Comstock read the script. Comstock refused. The fact that the play treated of prostitution was enough. He attempted to suppress it.

Comstock got into a trans-Atlantic

squabble with Shaw, whom he called an Irish smut dealer. Shaw characterized the rumpus as "comstockery." In so doing, he minted a word. The *American College Dictionary* currently defines comstockery as "overzealous censorship of the fine arts and literature, often mistaking outspokenly honest works for salacious productions."

The courts overruled Comstock in his attempt to suppress *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. The comstockery actually contributed to the play's success — a fact that theatrical press agents have never quite forgotten.

## II

Comstock knew as much about art as he did about literature and the drama. It followed, then, that he became an authority on the subject. To him, all art fell into two categories. Whether it was good or bad, whether it was by one of the classic academicians, by a French modernist, or by a newspaper cartoonist, made no difference. For him there was only nude art and non-nude art. Since few artists concerned themselves with the male form divine, it was Comstock's unpleasant duty to concern himself chiefly with naked women.

Although vague about many things, Comstock was very specific on the subject of female exposure. The undraped woman, alone in her boudoir,

was a thing of transcendent beauty, he ruled. But that same woman became an object of the vilest obscenity when viewed with male eyes, presumably from the other side of a keyhole. The ruling in question was made by Comstock on the occasion of his seizure of a brochure of the Art Students League, which contained reproductions of work by students. "Why," asked Comstock, "can't they paint trees and fruit and children with clothes on?" The League raised the question of how Comstock knew that a naked woman looked obscene unless he himself had been a Peeping Tom at one time or another.

*Life*, at the time a humorous weekly, distilled the country's criticism of Comstock's stand on nudity with one cartoon. It showed the reformer arresting an artist who had just finished a painting that showed a young lady swimming, with only her face above the water. "Don't you suppose," the crusader was saying in the caption below the picture, "that I can imagine what is *under* the water?"

Comstock lived in constant danger of his life. His mail regularly included such tokens of ill will as poisoned chocolates and highly-infectious small-pox scabs. He received several infernal machines, two of which went off with lethal force, though not when he was around. He was waylaid and mercilessly beaten numerous times. "What

happens to me is not important," he said once after being almost murdered. "What matters is that the Lord spares me to protect pure womanhood and the young people of the land."

Anthony Comstock was one of ten children born on a farm in New Canaan, Connecticut, in 1844. He came of a long line of Puritan stock. His father was a tight-lipped man who herded the children to church every Sunday. The mother — a frail, self-effacing woman of considerable intelligence — read him Biblical stories, sometimes for hours on end. Anthony was imaginative. He identified himself with the Biblical heroes, his mother with the heroines.

The mother, who died when Anthony was ten, remained enshrined in his memory. When he chose a wife, he chose a woman in the image of his mother. Fifty years after his mother's death, visiting her grave, he said that everything he had ever done had sprung from a consuming desire to honor her. Perhaps more than anything else, that explained Anthony Comstock.

Anthony grew up a farmer boy, attended a little red schoolhouse. Later he worked in a general store. He volunteered with the Union Army in the Civil War and began a life-long habit — keeping a diary. He was unpopular with other soldiers because he poured his whisky ration to the ground in-

stead of giving it to somebody. He recorded:

Have been twitted several times today about being a Christian. Would that I were a better one.

Mustered out of the Army, Anthony returned to Connecticut for a while. At 24, he was working as a dry goods salesman in a New York department store.

A hawker of French postcards used to do a brisk business among the male clerks in the store. Anthony, horrified, was convinced that the postcards were morally ruining the purchasers. He shadowed the hawker, learned the identity of his employer, and had the man arrested and convicted under an obscenity statute. He had found his career.

### III

When he was 27, Anthony married Maggie Hamilton, a frail, faded little woman ten years his senior. They lived in a little house in Brooklyn and had a daughter who died in infancy. Not long afterward, the father was snooping out vice in Manhattan's Chinatown when he came upon an infant girl whose mother was dying. He adopted the child, who turned out to be a mental defective, and loved her as his own. An invalid sister of his wife completed the household.

The climate of the post-bellum

period was ideal for the flowering of a man like Anthony Comstock. The vice inherent in reaction from war was widespread. In New York, Boss Tweed, running the city from the shadows, put sin on a municipal basis, using the police force as collectors and the judiciary as protectors. A little band of outraged citizens, headed by Morris K. Jesup, a wealthy banker interested in the YMCA movement, was searching desperately for a means to stem the scarlet tide. Comstock, who had created a small name for himself by smelling out pornography in his spare time, came to their attention.

Comstock had intelligence, the fire, sincerity and incorruptibility of the authentic fanatic, and physical strength. He was about six feet tall, bull-necked and barrel-chested, with tree-trunk legs. Ginger-colored side whiskers with a matching mustache supplied a dignity to a round, mirthless face.

The YMCA, with Banker Jesup's financial backing, organized the Society for the Suppression of Vice, making Comstock its secretary and general agent. Comstock, still keeping his department-store job, set out to destroy the Atlantic seaboard's supply of pornographic literature at its source. By shadowing sidewalk hawkers at night and on Sundays, he learned the location of the major publishing plants that supplied the

filth market, and made sure they were closed up.

The daily press and the magazines of the seventies were loaded with adroitly-worded advertisements for quacks, abortionists and contraceptive manufacturers. Comstock spent virtually all of his spare time during the latter months of 1872 writing answers to such ads under assumed names. He purchased several hundred dollars' worth of assorted merchandise, packed it in a suitcase, took a train to Washington and opened the suitcase for the benefit of a startled congressional committee by way of launching his campaign for a Federal obscenity law with teeth.

While shepherding his bill through Congress, Comstock accepted an invitation from President Grant to attend a White House reception. In his diary he recorded:

Attended the President's reception. . . . Shook hands with Grant. There were a large number present, among them certain ones who were almost caricatures of everything but what a modest lady ought to be. They were brazen — dressed extremely so silly — enameled faces and powdered hair — low dresses — hair almost ridiculous and altogether most extremely disgusting to every lover of pure, noble, modest woman. . . . They disgrace our land. . . .

The obscenity bill was passed and

Comstock was made a special agent of the Post Office to enforce its provisions. He quit his dry-goods job. His Federal powers enabled him to cross state lines. He spent half his time on trains and the other half conducting raids and appearing in courtrooms displaying contraceptives, abortion instruments, and pornographic art and literature. He bobbed up unexpectedly in post offices from New York to St. Louis, on the floor behind the mail slots, examining postals and holding letters up to the light in his ceaseless, frantic vigil against the obscene.

The man became a national influence in that he crystallized anti-vice sentiment. Vice-suppression societies sprang up in the Midwest, and the Boston Watch and Ward Society came into being. He became a lobbyist and either wrote or inspired blue laws in several states.

As the courts ruled favorably on convictions obtained under the so-called Federal Comstock law, the widespread implications of the statute became evident. Comstock had inserted into the law the phrase "for the prevention of conception." He placed such broad interpretations on that phrase that he was eventually to block sincere advocates of birth control, such as Margaret Sanger, at every turn. The phrase is still in the law today.



Comstock went on to father birth-control legislation in New York state, making it a criminal act to disseminate contraceptive information, even verbally. Then he became an early-day thought policeman. He used to slink along the quiet streets of Brooklyn, of a summer night, eavesdropping on people out on their front stoops giving voice to their thoughts. Once he pounced from the shadows and arrested a woman who told a neighbor that she and her husband, the parents of seven children, had decided to have no more.

#### IV

Comstock became a combination detective and actor. To infiltrate himself into low places in search of evidence, he assumed a protective coloration by wearing shabby clothes, sprinkling himself with rubbing alcohol, and lurching like a drunk. Once, to gain entrance to some saloons where pornography was sold in the back rooms, he hired a hearse and three funeral carriages from an undertaker, and filled them with vice agents masquerading as mourners. The normally wary saloon-keepers were completely deceived when the cortege, apparently on its way back from the grave, stopped outside their establishments and the hearse driver and the mourners trooped in.

Comstock's personal courage and

incorruptibility were never questioned. The Louisiana Lottery, which operated in New York in the eighties and nineties, offered him \$25,000 a year, for five years, to go away somewhere. His reaction was to conduct a single-handed raid on the lottery's headquarters, engaging in fisticuffs with several employees as he gathered evidence, and then to fight for Federal legislation that wrecked all lotteries.

Anna Lohmann, a notorious purveyor of "powders for married ladies," who operated for years in a mansion on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, offered Comstock a \$40,000 bribe after he had trapped her into selling him certain medication by pleading that his wife would die if she had any more children. Comstock publicized the proffer. Miss Lohmann cut her throat. Comstock, viewing the body, said, "A bloody end to a bloody life. May the Lord be praised." Anna Lohmann was but one of some twenty persons who resorted to self-destruction after encounters with Comstock.

Comstock, in the twentieth century, was a man who had traveled beyond his era. Pornography had gone out of fashion. The stage, literature and art were beginning to take on realism. Prudery had begun to wither on the vine. The reformer, *per se*, had become a ridiculous rather than a forbidding figure. Comstock's work

was done, though he didn't know it.

In the early years of the present century, a New York promoter obtained the North American rights to an innocuous fourth-rate French painting called *September Morn*, in which a nude young lady was depicted in a bathing ritual. The promoter hired a press agent to steam up interest in the picture. The press agent planted a copy in the window of an art shop. He hired actors to phone and call at Comstock's office, demanding that *September Morn* be suppressed.

Comstock rose to the bait. The art shop defied him. The press agent tipped the newspapers. Great crowds flocked to see the nude lady in the window. The picture made a fortune for the promoter, and became the only piece of art that hundreds of thousands of Americans knew by name.

Comstock, who had powers of arrest, appointed himself guardian of the morals of specific individuals. One day in 1906, he was visited in his bleak little office in the financial district by Harry Thaw, an eccentric young Pittsburgh millionaire. Stanford White, architect of Madison Square Garden, was, as Thaw informed Comstock, dallying with Mrs. Thaw, the former Evelyn Nesbit, in his private apartment atop the Garden.

Comstock covered his well-caricatured whiskers with a handkerchief

and presented himself to White as a city building inspector. White, thinking the handkerchief was the mask of a bandit, called the police. This fiasco led Thaw to despair that the reformer would ever get evidence of immorality against White. But he became increasingly enraged by Comstock's detailed surmises of what was going on in the architect's apartment, and finally murdered White.

In 1914, when he was three score and ten, Comstock was living in Summit, New Jersey, in a sprawling gray frame house, with his wife, who was to outlive him; her invalid sister; and the adopted defective daughter, now a quarrelsome woman given to obscenities — which he overlooked.

There were many things to worry the old man as he weeded his garden of a soft summer twilight: the tango, a dance he considered disgraceful; a daring English literary exhibitionist named Elinor Glyn, who discussed sex in her novels; and a really dangerous corruptionist named Havelock Ellis, who had authored such incendiary volumes as *Erotic Symbolism*.

President Wilson sent Comstock to San Francisco in 1915 as United States representative to the International Purity Congress. The crusader overtaxed himself by uncovering sin on the Barbary Coast between the purity sessions. When he got back to Summit, Comstock knew the end was

near. But he had trained others — notably John S. Sumner, who is still functioning as head of the modern New York suppression society — to carry on. He was confident that his state and Federal laws would withstand assaults by the forces of evil — a confidence hardly misplaced, since the laws are still very much in force.

Anthony Comstock lies today, in Evergreen Cemetery in Brooklyn, beside the wife who looked so much

like his mother. The Reverend Davidson, the sexually-frustrated reformer in Maugham's *Rain*, found, in the shape of the mountains of Nebraska, an exciting analogy to the anatomy of the human female. Psychiatrists may be interested to consider that Anthony Comstock had one extravagance — the collection of Japanese vases. Sometimes he sat by the hour, fondling their soft, graceful curves.

## LAMENT

BY SJANNA SOLUM

Why must this dark Cassandra mood persist  
In robbing me of joy I know is mine —  
When no least omen, no sure subtle sign  
Decrees a nemesis now must exist  
And lie in wait? What phantom lingers here  
To stir my heart with such stark dread? I go  
White-faced and stricken, who should only know  
Anticipation, intimately dear.

Is it a shadow of the past that rolls  
Derisive overhead to dim the sun  
So lately warm above? Now, being one  
Who serves as sexton mournfully and tolls  
A heart of heaviness above the bier,  
I only know a still-born joy lies here . . .

# Some hopeful facts about ALLERGIES

IT HAS BEEN estimated that one out of every two people in our country suffers, or has suffered, from an allergy. These people are unusually sensitive to certain things which are harmless to the average person.



Plants, dust, animals, foods, drugs, chemicals and bacteria are among the most common causes of allergic disorders. When susceptible persons come in contact with these troublemakers,

it is thought that a substance called *histamine* is released by the body into the blood stream. This in turn may lead to sneezing attacks, skin rashes, digestive upsets or more serious conditions.



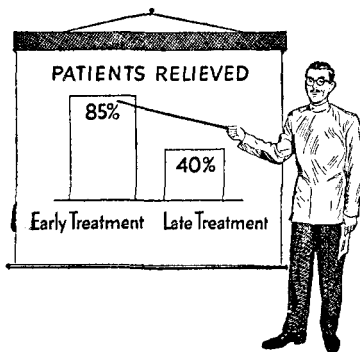
Fortunately, recent developments by medical science make it possible for the doctor to do more than ever before to relieve allergies. New drugs, known as anti-histaminics, are helpful in many cases, especially those caused by substances which are inhaled. This includes hay fever which alone attacks

some three and one half million people each year.



The doctor may recommend injections of the allergy-causing substance to help build up resistance to it. He may also suggest steps for avoiding or lessening contact with the trouble-maker.

Recent research has shown that some allergic conditions improve when the patient is helped to resolve emotional conflicts. Today, authorities say that, with proper medical care, 3 out of 4 allergy victims can be greatly helped.



For the best results, treatment to increase resistance should be started in advance of exposure to the causes of allergy. Hay fever treatments, for example, are more than twice as effective when given before the pollen season starts rather than after.

There is still no "sure cure" for allergies, but patients who maintain close and continued co-operation with the doctor have the best chance for a great measure of relief. To learn more facts about allergies, write for a copy of Metropolitan's free booklet, 89-L, "Allergic To What?"

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## A YOUNG COMMUNIST MEETS THE PRESS

*People often wonder about the mental operations of young men and women who have embraced the Communist philosophy. An interesting insight into these operations was recently supplied by an admitted young Communist, Hans Freistadt, on a telecast of Meet the Press, presented by the National Broadcasting Company. A student at the University of North Carolina, and the recipient of an Atomic Energy Commission fellowship, Mr. Freistadt has been one of the storm centers of the congressional investigation into the conduct of the commission. His remarks on Meet the Press are presented here slightly cut.*

THE participants in the telecast, aside from Mr. Freistadt, were I. F. Stone of the *Compass*, C. Ashley Smith of the *Durham Morning Herald*, Ned Brooks of NBC, and Lawrence E. Spivak, editor of the *MERCURY*. Martha Rountree, producer of *Meet the Press*, presided over the conference.

STONE: Mr. Freistadt, I want to compliment you for your courage in these difficult times, and for saying frankly that you're a Communist. I defend the political rights of Communists in America. But I'd like to ask you, a thoughtful young Communist intellectual, how do you defend the absence of political rights for dissidents in the Soviet Union?

FREISTADT: On the question of courage, may I point out that my courage is likely to cost me \$1600, and

that that's not a very good inducement for other Communists to do the same. About the absence of political rights in the Soviet Union, I think it is a matter of allegation. I think it's a matter of what news reports you're willing to believe. There is very strong evidence to the effect that there is a great deal of political freedom and discussion in the Soviet Union.

ROUNTREE: Have you been to Russia?

FREISTADT: No, I have not. And therefore, I can't consider myself an expert on Russia.

STONE: Well, Mr. Freistadt, I'm not asking you to trust to newspaper reports, which are pretty bad. But quite seriously, as a thoughtful person who knows enough about what's going on, do you think that people who have dissident views, people who disagree even in a small way with the Party line, have a

right to voice their disagreement in the Soviet Union — as we believe you have a right to voice your disagreement in America?

FREISTADT: Yes. Especially people who are willing to make constructive suggestions within the socialist framework.

STONE: What do you mean by that? You're hedging.

FREISTADT: No, I'm not really hedging. I think that people who have constructive ideas as to how the socialist society that is being built in the Soviet Union ought to be built have as great —

STONE: Suppose they have destructive ideas — we defend the right to have what other people may consider destructive ideas.

FREISTADT: That depends a great deal on the historical circumstances and the historical conditions under which one is living. We did not, after the American Revolution, defend the right of British Tories to organize and advocate the return of the King.

STONE: But in the political controversy at the time, we permitted great freedom to people who were accused by the democratic forces of being monarchists, as Hamilton was. All those people had a full right to speak.

FREISTADT: Well, what is your point?

STONE: How do you defend the ab-

sence of political rights for dissidents in the Soviet Union?

FREISTADT: I don't defend the absence. I say there is no absence.

SPIVAK: What do you think the Communist Party stands for?

FREISTADT: The Communist Party stands for the establishment of socialism in this country through the free choice of the majority of the American people.

SPIVAK: Do you believe it stands at all for the overthrow of this government by violence?

FREISTADT: Not only do I not believe it does, I know it does not.

SPIVAK: How do you know that?

FREISTADT: Because I'm a member, and I've known people who were expelled from the U. S. Communist Party.

SPIVAK: You don't think, for example, that they may have kept you in the dark for the time being?

FREISTADT: That would be very difficult. I've been chairman of a club. I've been a member of a section committee. I've been a delegate to the state convention. It would have been rather difficult to keep me in the dark all this time.

SPIVAK: Have you listened to many of the ex-Communists, and have you read many of their confessions?

FREISTADT: I have read their testimony. I think most of it is perfectly absurd.



SPIVAK: You don't believe what they say?

FREISTADT: How could I possibly believe it when it's so contrary to all of my personal experiences within the Communist Party? When I see people being expelled from the Party precisely for advocating force and violence?

SPIVAK: Would you remain as a member of the Communist Party if you knew that every branch of the Party was pledged to indulge in national treason?

FREISTADT: No, I would not. But I know that that is not so.

SPIVAK: Did you read the statements some months ago by the leaders of the Communist Party, in France and Italy and almost everywhere else, to the effect that in case of a war they would fight on the side of the Soviet Union?

FREISTADT: Those statements, if you read and analyze them carefully, amount essentially to what I told the congressional committee when I appeared before it: namely, that Communists are prepared to defend their country against any aggression, but are not prepared to support an aggressive war.

SPIVAK: Do you think that they could always tell which side was the aggressor?

FREISTADT: I think that aggression has been defined with remarkable

clarity by — if you will excuse me — a Soviet diplomat called Litvinov: The first party to use force for the settlement of international disputes is guilty of aggression. I think usually these matters can be defined with great clarity.

SPIVAK: Do you think the Soviets were guilty of aggression against the Baltic states, for example, which they've incorporated into the Soviet Union?

FREISTADT: Some claims are accurate, others are not. It is a matter of historical record that the Baltic states were part of Russia before the First World War, and that they were taken away from her by an international anti-Communist alliance which wanted to prevent the people of the Soviet Union from having their socialist society.

SMITH: Mr. Freistadt, how do you justify your willingness to accept a fellowship from a government which you seek to destroy?

FREISTADT: I don't seek to destroy the American democracy. I have a great deal of respect for it. I seek very definitely to oust the present administration by vote.

SMITH: What specific points do you feel should be changed?

FREISTADT: I think the two most disgraceful points are, first of all, our foreign policy, which is dedicated to violent anti-Sovietism, rather

than the Roosevelt policy of friendship with the Soviet Union, which is the only policy that can insure peace; and second, the constant infringement of civil rights on the home scene.

SPIVAK: On your rights, for example, to speak here tonight as freely as you're speaking, Mr. Freistadt?

FREISTADT: Yes, on my civil rights to hold a fellowship and be a part-time instructor at the University, no matter what political views I may hold. That civil right has been infringed upon.

SPIVAK: Mr. Freistadt, do you think we ought to give Russia the secret of the atomic bomb?

FREISTADT: I think there should be international control of atomic energy and that the atomic bomb should be outlawed.

SPIVAK: Do you think we should give Russia the information, the secrets, that we have? Do you think we can trust her with that?

FREISTADT: I think you can trust an international authority, in which the Soviet Union would, of course, participate.

SPIVAK: That's not being responsive. Do you think we ought to let Russia have the secret of the atomic bomb?

FREISTADT: I think I've answered your question. We ought to turn the atomic bombs over to an international authority and we should

outlaw them. The atomic bomb is a misuse of atomic energy. It's like — to use a famous quotation — using electricity only for the electric chair.

SPIVAK: If you had the information of the atomic bomb, would you take it upon yourself to decide who should, and who should not, get the secrets you had?

FREISTADT: I don't want information about the atomic bomb. I am not anxious to make atomic bombs for anybody. I want to pursue the peaceful work of science.

BROOKS: Mr. Freistadt, when this fellowship was awarded to you at the University of North Carolina, did anyone ask you whether you were a member of the Communist Party?

FREISTADT: No, nobody did.

BROOKS: Well, did anyone tell you that if you were a member it would make a difference? There was no mention of it, as I understand it.

FREISTADT: No, there was not, and that's a very good thing. Why should there be a question about the political opinions of applicants for a scientific fellowship?

BROOKS: I have here a little document called the *Communist Manifesto*. I assume you are probably more familiar with it than I am; it's one of the few things that's cheap these days — you can buy it for a nickel.

I find in numerous places the terms revolution, force of arms, and so forth, by which this change is supposed to be brought about. I'd like to ask you whether the Communist Party of the U. S., as it's constituted today, subscribes to this *Manifesto*.

FREISTADT: The *Communist Manifesto* is a document that was written in authoritarian Europe in 1848, at a time when —

BROOKS: The language is still the same. Force of arms meant the same then as it does now.

FREISTADT: The call for revolution is a call for revolution in an authoritarian society in which there are no peaceful channels for progress. The Communist Party believes in the principles of historical materialism —

BROOKS: Does the Party endorse what's contained in that book?

FREISTADT: It does not endorse that part of it which says that only by force and violence can the end of Communists be achieved. It does not, because today in our country, as long as the basic principles of our Constitution are respected, we have peaceful channels for progress, and we intend to make use of them.

SPIVAK: Why do they keep on selling the *Manifesto*?

FREISTADT: Because it's a marvelous historical document. It is the first

clear enunciation of the principles of historical materialism. If you try to make an analysis of the philosophy, rather than dig out quotes for use against Communists, I think you'll get a much better picture.

SPIVAK: Every time a Communist says he wants to overthrow a government by violence, he's only joking, isn't he?

FREISTADT: He is not joking. Whenever a Communist has made that statement, it has been under circumstances in which there was no democracy by means of which change could be accomplished.

SPIVAK: And he always interprets what is, and what isn't a democracy. For example, you don't think we have a democracy, do you?

FREISTADT: I think we have a great deal of democracy.

SPIVAK: But you'd like to throw out our present régime, and put in the eleven men who are now on trial?

FREISTADT: I would like very much to see a few of those in the Cabinet. We wouldn't be facing a depression if they were in.

ROUNTREE: We'd get what?

FREISTADT: We'd get socialism.

BROOKS: Let me follow that up, Mr. Freistadt. I think you have said that you would take the oath of loyalty to this government.

FREISTADT: To the U. S. and its Constitution.

BROOKS: How can you justify that when this government has said officially, in several different ways, that the Communist Party is subversive and that its aim is to overthrow the government by methods that are unconstitutional? How do those two things square?

FREISTADT: First of all, it was just the Attorney-General. Who is he to decide what is subversive and what is not? Can he dictate what organizations are lawful?

BROOKS: That is the policy of the government. That is the statement of the government, that the Communist Party is subversive.

FREISTADT: It's an unconstitutional statement. The government is trying to regulate thoughts.

BROOKS: What do you think are the motives of this government in saying that your party is subversive, if it is not?

FREISTADT: I think it is trying to create anti-Communist hysteria, the purpose of which is to take the minds of people away from the coming depression, from the fight for higher wages, and from our present foreign policy, which I think is absolutely suicidal.

BROOKS: When I talked to you before, you said that this fellowship was withdrawn. Has it been withdrawn, incidentally?

FREISTADT: Not officially.

BROOKS: I believe you said that if it were withdrawn, you would then continue to go to school under the GI Bill of Rights. In other words, you would continue to receive benefits from the government; is that correct?

FREISTADT: They would be less, and they wouldn't last as long. And I don't think that I would be able to get my degree under those circumstances.

BROOKS: But you would accept benefits from this government which you say is all wrong, is that right?

FREISTADT: Oh, certainly. I presume there are some Republicans among you who would accept benefits.

BROOKS: I have no politics myself.

SPIVAK: Mr. Freistadt, do you think that the Russian government, in its promises and its practices, is superior to our government here?

FREISTADT: That's a very difficult question. I believe that —

SPIVAK: It's an easy question; it's a difficult answer.

FREISTADT: Thank you.

ROUNTREE: No editorializing now.

FREISTADT: I believe, certainly, that under the Soviet government, people have made more progress during the last thirty years than we have made. I think it is a government that has put an end to exploitation and crises, and in that respect I think it can be called superior.

However, it has not, up to this time, provided a higher standard of living.

SPIVAK: Do you think, for example, that you would be getting the same freedom to speak in Russia that you're being given here today?

FREISTADT: I certainly don't think I'd lose a fellowship for being a member of the Communist Party.

SPIVAK: I'm certain you wouldn't. But do you think you would lose it if they thought you were a member of the Democratic party, or if you urged our kind of democracy in Russia?

FREISTADT: Perhaps the best answer is the facts. The physiologist Pavlov was given every opportunity to pursue his scientific studies and research in the Soviet Union, even though his views were not Communist. That's probably the most famous case.

ROUNTREE: May I ask you something, Mr. Freistadt? Have you ever considered going to school in Russia?

FREISTADT: I have considered it. I would like very much to pay a visit to the Soviet Union and see for myself what it is like.

STONE: Mr. Freistadt, suppose that the Soviet government should decide in physics, as they have in genetics, that a certain theory was false and anti-Marxist. Would you, without an examination of the

facts for yourself, accept that decision?

FREISTADT: No, of course not. However, I would disagree with you about what happened in the genetics case. I have carefully read the published articles in the matter of genetics, and the impression I got was that it was a scientific question argued and decided on the basis of scientific merits.

STONE: Fine. Would you defend the right of people in the Soviet Union who disagree with that point of view in genetics to go on teaching and spreading their own ideas?

FREISTADT: Oh, certainly I would. In fact, it is being done.

STONE: Let me ask you one question, and really answer me without evasion.

FREISTADT: I think I've answered all your questions that way.

STONE: No, you evaded my first question.

FREISTADT: Well, ask it again.

STONE: Now let's get down to brass tacks. You're a scientist, and you know how much people have always hated and feared new ideas. You know what happened to Bruno and Galileo and all the others. How do you see the problem of providing freedom in a Communist society for those men with ideas that run counter to those of their contemporaries? It

hasn't been solved in Russia; you know that as well as I do.

FREISTADT: No I do not. I think it has been solved.

STONE: Then you are not being honest with me, or with yourself. You know very well that dissident opinion is not allowed to express itself. How do we provide leeway against bureaucrats for men with ideas that the people of their time dislike?

FREISTADT: I resent your insinuation that I'm not being honest, but we'll pass over that. There will always be bureaucrats and one has to wage a consistent fight against them. If you look at some Soviet magazines, like *Krokodil*, which is a humorous magazine, you'll see they are waging a very sharp battle against bureaucrats.

STONE: That battle is against cosmopolitanism.

FREISTADT: That's another battle, and we can argue about that some other time. However, the question of allowing dissident opinion has, to a large extent, been solved in the Soviet Union.

STONE: By sending the dissidents to jail?

FREISTADT: No, I don't think dissidents are being sent to jail. The people that are being sent to jail —

STONE: Do you mean to tell me that

dissidents can speak or write or publish books in the Soviet Union?

FREISTADT: There is a great deal of criticism all the time in the Soviet press.

STONE: Where are people criticizing what is the accepted, dominant line of the Communist Party?

FREISTADT: In their trade union meetings.

SPIVAK: Mr. Freistadt, do you think that an atomic energy fellowship should be given to an avowed fascist if he has the ability?

FREISTADT: As long as he just keeps his opinions to himself, and does not break the law, I think he should be given a fellowship. What I think should be prohibited is the following: Making remarks that incite to hatred and violence against minority races and people. That I think should be prohibited by law.

BROOKS: What if a Klansman were given a fellowship? Would that be all right with you?

FREISTADT: No.

BROOKS: You think the Klan is more intent on overthrowing the government than the Communist Party?

FREISTADT: Yes, the Klan is very definitely more intent on destroying our American form of democracy than any other organization.

BROOKS: I am not trying to defend the Klan, understand.

ROUNTREE: I'm sorry, our time is up.

# ALFREDO'S SWEETHEART

A STORY

BY ROCCO L. FUMENTO

ALFREDO sat on the banks of the Po River and gazed dejectedly at his reflection in its clear, slow-moving waters. In happier times he would have been rather pleased with what he saw — the black hair curling loosely over the high forehead; the light eyes clashing, not unromantically, with the dark complexion; the full lips which, when smiling, uncovered teeth with the purity of Tuscan marble. Yes, in happier times this reflection had often made him aware that he was, as the women called him, a “handsome *diavolo*.” But at this moment he was in no mood for self-satisfaction. He was only twenty-four and yet life was over for him.

After six long years, to come home to this! He was no longer angry — only very unhappy. Even this land of his was now an alien land. He might have been able to bear its strangeness if Adriana were still his. But she was not. She had betrayed his love, even as this land had betrayed his hopes.

Oh, how he had died many deaths in his anxiety to see Adriana again; to speak to her of his love; to hold her warm, soft body close to his; to stroke her thick, black clouds of hair; to kiss her full, wine-red lips, her eyes, her throat, her little sun-browned nose; to tell her they could be married at last.

Yes, his beloved Adriana. He thought of her and tried to hate her. It was on this very spot that she had told him, so matter-of-factly and without shame. But first she had questioned him.

“You say you have fought with the English and the Americans? Why did you do so, Alfredo?” she asked innocently enough. “You did not have to. It was safer being a captive, was it not?”

“That is true,” he had answered complacently, “but was it not proper that I should fight with the allies of our new government?” He shrugged his shoulders. “Then, too, I hated the

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Germans. Did they not get us into this war?"

Adriana nodded in sympathetic agreement. "It is true. And now it will not be so difficult to tell you that which I must tell you." She sighed, lifted her heavy, woolen skirt, and pulled out a *fiasco* of red wine. "But first drink deeply of this. It will give you strength to hear that which I must say."

Alfredo did not understand why he should have need of fortification, but he drank greedily and asked no questions.

Adriana continued. "We at home also hated the Germans, but mostly because we were told to hate them by our new government and our new allies. But I hated them from the beginning. And I, too, wanted to aid our new friends, the English and the Americans." She sighed sorrowfully.

"It was sad to see them so unhappy — away from their wives and loved ones. There was one Englishman . . ." She took a deep breath. "He was very unhappy. He reminded me of you, far away from those who loved you with perhaps no one to comfort you. Tell me, Alfredo," she asked plaintively, "was there no one to comfort you?"

Alfredo shrugged impatiently. "Let us not talk of such foolishness and let us begin to make plans for our wedding." He encircled her waist

with his arms and tried to kiss her. But Adriana pushed him away with great force.

"No, no, Alfredo! You must tell me. Was there no one?"

Oh, these women, Alfredo thought. Why must they torture themselves and us men by asking such questions? "No," he answered irritably. "I mean yes. That is," he shrugged, "there was someone who wanted to comfort me but I would not let her." He laughed and nudged Adriana slyly. "Does that make you happy?" he asked, attempting to embrace her again.

She evaded him and said sadly, "No, that does not make me happy. It would have been better if you had let her comfort you."

Alfredo was amazed. "*Caro Dio!*" he exclaimed. "You women never fail to astound me. Here I have been keeping myself pure for you and instead of pleasing you it makes you sad. Now why would it have been better if I had let her comfort me?"

Adriana buried her face in her hands and moaned softly, "Because I comforted the Englishman."

"Because you comforted the Englishman," he said bewilderedly. "Because you comforted the Englishman!" he repeated, startled. He took her hands away from her face and looked deeply into her eyes. "Adriana, what are you trying to tell me?"



She looked at him sadly. "I think you already know, Alfredo."

"Yes," he looked away unhappily, "I think I already know. But it is hard for me to believe," he said. "You were always my good and sweet Adriana — almost saintly. You never let me kiss you," he said resentfully, "until I was going away."

"But I do not feel as though I have sinned," she argued, "for you see, I did it not only because I was sorry for him, but also because I was sorry for you."

"No," he shook his head sadly, "I do not see."

"*Caro* Alfredo, listen to me," she pleaded. "He was a very sad soldier. Sad soldiers do not fight well. If he did not fight well, the war would last longer. If I made him happy he would fight better, the war would be over sooner, and then you would come home. I am only a woman," she reasoned. "How else can a woman help in a war?"

Do all women reason in this manner?, Alfredo wondered, and said mournfully, "There must be other ways than to give yourself to every soldier you meet."

Adriana threw her head back in angry resentment. "That is a wicked thing to say. I did not give myself to every soldier I met. Only two!" she said indignantly. "And our allies!"

Alfredo leaped to his feet. "Two!"

Adriana swallowed deeply. "Yes. There was an American, also."

"An American!" Now he was angry. He shouted and his voice sounded as though it did not belong to him. "And was he very unhappy?"

"Yes," she whimpered, "he was also very unhappy. But please do not be angry with me, Alfredo," she pleaded. "They meant nothing to me. Every time I was with them I would close my eyes and it was you I was with. I have always loved only you. My heart was true to you, believe me Alfredo. We could still be married and the four of us could be so happy."

"The four of us!" Alfredo sputtered and nearly choked. "*Dio mio* you would have me live under the same roof with those . . . those . . . lovers of yours?"

"Alfredo, do not talk so foolish," Adriana laughed. "They have long since returned to their homes. But," she said sadly, "each left me with child and it has been so hard to provide for them. But now that you are home everything will be fine." She smiled demurely and came close to him. "You will love them, Alfredo. They are beautiful babies, and so smart! To think that you have just arrived home and already you have two sons!"

Alfredo could not remember clearly what happened after that. He knew

Adriana went home sobbing—he knew the large *fiasco* of wine was nearly empty, but that was all. I must talk with mama, he thought. She will tell me what to do. *Cara* mama, who had been both mother and father to him for twenty years. Mama who was more man than woman, with her large, bony hands, her hard, beautiful muscles, her deep, husky voice.

## II

Alfredo arrived home to a flurry of flying feathers and a sound of loud squawking. Mama was killing a fat hen. Her shrewd eyes observed Alfredo closely.

"You have seen Adriana?" she asked.

"Yes, mama," he answered dispiritedly. His tortured eyes swept her brown, hardened face. "You knew. Why did you not tell me?"

Mama was all woman now. "It was not my place to tell you, Alfredo," she said softly. She went into the house and Alfredo followed.

"You still love her, Alfredo?" she asked.

"I do not know," he muttered. "I believe so," he added lamely.

"Then do not be a fool. Forgive her and marry her."

Alfredo was amazed. "Forgive her!" he cried indignantly. "After what she has done?"

"And what has she done that many

other girls in the village have not done?" mama asked sharply. But then she spoke softly again. "She is not a bad girl, Alfredo, for, believe me, bad girls do not have babies."

Alfredo laughed sardonically. "Then what is a bad girl, mama?"

"Ask Francesca Migliori," mama said harshly. "She will be able to tell you."

Alfredo was startled. "Francesca? The saintly Migliori girl?"

Mama's lips tightened. "She is not so saintly now, *figlio mio*."

"But what happened?" Alfredo questioned bewilderedly. "What did she do?"

Mama shrugged her large shoulders. "She was not satisfied with life here in the village. She went to Torino and made a lot of money. The soldiers have all gone home now and she has come back and is living like a queen. But she has no babies." Mama shook her head sadly. "But who are we that we should judge others?"

"Yes, my son," she went on, "much has changed in the past few years. You cannot hope to see things the way you saw them before you went away. If you do, you will never find peace. You are older now and you must seek a greater understanding of people."

"Mama," Alfredo cried. "You say things have changed. Maybe she no longer loves me."

"She loves you, Alfredo," mama

said. "In that she has not changed. She is not to blame for what has happened to her. You were away too long. She is a girl who must have love. Adriana will be true to you once you warm her bed." Mama spoke with firm conviction. "She loves you, Alfredo. Mark my words, she will make you a good wife."

This was what Alfredo had wanted — assurance from mama. Yes, Adriana still loved him. She would make him a good wife.

He jumped up. "You are right, mama. She loves me and I love her. I will go to her at once."

His feet had wings as he pointed them in the direction of Adriana's house, but when he came within sight of it he stopped to catch his breath. It would not do to have Adriana think he was too anxious.

He could see her now. She was sitting on the doorstep of the house nursing what was undoubtedly her younger baby. Alfredo stared in open-mouthed admiration. It was the first time he had seen her breast bared. The gentle rise and fall of it with her breathing fascinated him. It filled him with such a terrible longing that he found it difficult to breathe.

A tug on his trousers brought him to irritating awareness. The tugger was a thin, blond child with a runny nose and enormous black-buttoned eyes — eyes which stared up at him

with smiling friendliness. The Englishman's child, Alfredo thought bitterly, as he tried to brush him aside.

Adriana looked up and into Alfredo's eyes. Alfredo hung back uneasily, trying to think of an appropriate thing to say and at the same time trying to disengage himself from the little hands, which now clasped him firmly about both legs.

At last Adriana broke the uneasy silence. "Well, Alfredo. You have returned. Are you here to call me more names?"

Alfredo tried to appear dignified. "I have thought it over, Adriana. I love you. I have decided to forgive you. We will be married as soon as possible."

Adriana snatched her breast away from the child and shoved it angrily inside her blouse. "Do you want me to kiss your feet, Alfredo — to wash them with the tears of my shame?"

Alfredo answered with great dignity. "There is no need for that. I am not an unreasonable man, Adriana."

Adriana stood up proudly. "If that is all you have to say you can leave now."

Alfredo was bewildered. He had not expected anything like this. "But you do not understand, Adriana. I am willing to forgive you and to forget the past."

Adriana spoke coldly — and yet a little sadly. "No," she shook her

head slowly and looked at the child in her arms. "You will not forget, Alfredo. And I cannot accept your forgiveness without accepting the shame of my children. I love them. I cannot be ashamed of them. You must take me as I am or not at all."

Alfredo was angry and hurt. "I should never have come back. It was mama's doing. She said I should forgive you. What a fool I have been." He pulled himself away from the hands which still clutched at his trousers. "And you . . . you little son of an Englishman, stop trying to rob me of my trousers."

The big, button eyes squinted up in hurt surprise and overflowed with tears. The sobbing child ran to the arms of his mother. Adriana looked at Alfredo furiously. "Go away from here you . . . you . . . unnameable animal."

"Do not despair," Alfredo retorted. "I will leave here as fast as my legs will carry me." And with head held erect, he made what he hoped was a dignified departure.

He was angry. He did not remember ever being so angry before. That is why he did not see fat Fiori until he heard himself spoken to.

"Alfredo, you have been to see Adriana?" Fiori's fat face leered at him foolishly as his fat arms struggled to hold on to a plump suckling pig.

"And what concern is it of yours,

you fat fool?" he answered irritably.

Fiori's thick lips continued to smile stupidly, but his small eyes did not smile. "But it is of deep concern to me. I have heard that you and Adriana are no longer betrothed. I have always wanted to marry her, but she would have none of me. If she is no longer yours then perhaps I have a chance."

Alfredo looked at him furiously. "She is all yours. I want nothing of her."

Fiori beamed happily. "Oh thank you, Alfredo, thank you. I was just on my way to see her." He pointed to the squealing suckling under his arm. "This is a present for her. She is beautiful, no? I nursed her myself."

"She bears a true family resemblance," Alfredo muttered savagely, brushing past him. "I am sure Adriana will welcome her."

Women! Women! Why did the good Lord make them so soft, so tender, so infinitely desirable and so treacherous, Alfredo thought in despair. What I need is some cognac. Good cognac will make one forget any woman. And so he went towards the village and Pietro's bar.

### III

Pietro's bar was as Alfredo had always remembered it — dark, dirty, dismal, and with the musty smell of red wine fighting for dominance over

the heavier odors of cognac, gin, and vermouth. The same people sat at the same dirty, marble-topped tables; the same drunks were hanging over the grimy-gray, marble bar.

Pietro had not changed either. Tufts of gray hair still grew out of his enormous, ass-like ears, his teeth were protruding kernels of yellow corn, and he smelled strongly of garlic.

"Hello, Pietro," Alfred muttered listlessly. "Give me a bottle of cognac. A large one."

Pietro blew his nose in his hands, wiped them on his dirty apron, and shuffled his feet uncomfortably. "Well, now," he sputtered, "a bottle of cognac —"

Alfredo cut him short. "I have money," he spat out. "I will pay."

Pietro smiled his yellow smile. "Oh, my friend, I did not mean —"

Alfredo slapped the marble bar impatiently. "Shut up and give me the bottle."

Pietro shrugged and disappeared into the wine cellar.

"You still have a bad temper, Alfredo." The voice was brittle and hard, like the tone of a worn piano. Alfredo turned to face its owner. He looked at the face. Did he know it? At one time it had been beautiful — now it had the pointed look of a grasping animal. The eyes were smiling bits of hardness; the hair was

blonde — too blonde. He looked at the body — it was built to go to bed with, and the breasts pointed at him defiantly. Obviously this girl knew him. But who was she? There was something about her — but no, it could not be.

"You do not remember me, Alfredo," she laughed softly. "Francesca. Francesca Migliori."

"Francesca Migliori?" He was startled. "But your hair? . . ."

"I like it this way," she laughed a hard little laugh. "There are too many brunettes in Italy."

Pietro returned with the cognac and Alfredo paid him. Francesca looked at the bottle and smiled pityingly. "You have heard about Adriana and now you are going to forget her with a bottle of cognac." She tossed her head. "What a fool she was. She knew nothing about men . . . nothing."

"Shut up, Francesca," Alfredo muttered, as he turned towards the door.

"Wait, Alfredo," she called after him.

Alfredo turned and she walked slowly towards him. "It is not good to celebrate alone. May I come with you?"

Alfredo shrugged his shoulders. "I will not be pleasant company."

Francesca laughed harshly. "I am used to unpleasant company. Come."

She took his arm. "We will go down to the river. It is quiet there."

Yes, it was quiet there on the banks of the softly-whispering Po. The newly-risen moon, reflected in its gentle waters, was a shimmering silver-gold. Alfredo paused to open the bottle of cognac and gave it to Francesca. She swallowed deeply as Alfredo stared in amazement. Not even mama could drink cognac in this manner — as if it were water. Well, Alfredo thought, if she can do it so can I, and he nearly choked as the hot liquid flamed its way down his throat. "What foul cognac," he sputtered.

Francesca laughed softly, took the bottle away from him and placed it beside her as she sat down on the hard clay of the river bank. She pulled Alfredo down beside her and drew his head across her lap.

Alfredo felt content. The cognac had warmed him. And though he had not forgotten Adriana, at least he was not remembering her. Not with Francesca's fingers being little butterfly wings in his hair. Francesca. What had happened to shy little Francesca? From saint to streetwalker, he thought bitterly. But she is not the only one. Something has happened to all of us. We have lost our laughter. It is terrible to lose laughter. Oh, lost childhood . . . lost laughter.

The sound of Francesca's voice

startled him. "Why are you silent, Alfredo? Are you thinking of her?"

"Of her?" he asked. He shook his head. "No. Of all of us. What has happened to us? What has happened to you, Francesca?"

Francesca laughed — a frightened little laugh. "To me? The war has happened to me, Alfredo."

"But the war has happened to all of us."

"Then that is what is wrong with all of us," she muttered.

"But we cannot blame everything on the war."

"No," she whispered fiercely. "But it is easier to blame it on the war."

"Yes, it is easier," he said bitterly. "But do you think — ?"

"Shut up, Alfredo, for God's sake shut up," she hissed. "I do not want to think."

She brought her face down to his and pressed her mouth hard against his. Her tongue was hot and moist between his lips. "Do not talk of such things, Alfredo," she whispered. "Do not think about them. Only love me, love me, love me!"

Do not think about such things. Of course. Do not think. His fingers trembled as they fumbled over her body. Francesca's heavy breathing, her half-closed eyes, her clawing, pawing, scratching hands frightened, and yet excited him. Love-making with Adriana had never been like this.

Suddenly he thought of the Englishman and the American. Had it been like this? Was Adriana like Francesca? A pawing, scratching, grasping animal — wanting, wanting, wanting?

He felt sick. He wanted to vomit. He stood up abruptly and looked down upon Francesca with horrified disgust.

Francesca's eyes flew open. "Alfredo. What is it?"

"*Puttana!*" Alfredo spat at her contemptuously. "Are there no good girls left in this God-forsaken country?" He shuddered and walked hurriedly away.

The cognac bottle crashed dangerously close to him as Francesca screamed furiously at his retreating back. She cursed him with curses he had never heard a woman use before, but he did not look back. Even when he heard her wild sobs he did not look back.

This foul land with its foul women, Alfredo thought bitterly. I must have air — good, clean, fresh air to take the rotten smell away from my nostrils. I will climb to Marco's peak. It will be good up there.

And so Alfredo began his steep climb, past the moonlit vineyards at Marco's thick base, past the groves of black, umbrella-like olive trees — up, up; no time to rest, to slacken his pace.

Dawn was breaking when Alfredo

reached Marco's peak — a rich, golden, gaily-tinted dawn. As the sun rose higher, the valley below wore a robe of gloriously blending reds, blues, greens and purples. Here from the mountain top one could not tell that the valley below was dirty, smelly, a ravaged land. This land, he thought — like a woman who has slept with so many masters that she cares not who her next master will be as long as she has food and a place to sleep. And the people — they are the same. Like dumb animals, Alfredo thought.

Only mama was different. But he remembered something mama had said — something he had only half listened to and only half remembered. "You must seek understanding."

The scene below blurred before his eyes and Alfredo realized that he was crying. Yes, the land was foul, and the people had sinned. "But it is my sin, too," he cried out in anguish, and he knew that one does not run in fear from sin. One fights to have it washed away — "as mama is fighting — as I must fight, and Adriana with me," for no longer did he try to convince himself that he could live without her. "I will warm her bed so thoroughly that she will soon forget the others," he shouted to unresponsive Marco.

And thus Alfredo raced homeward down Marco's steep back. And as he

ran he laughed and cried, for he knew that no longer was he a stranger in an alien land.

But then a terrifying thought struck him. What if Adriana had consented to marriage with fat Fiori? *Maria Vergine*, he prayed, do not let it be so. Fat, greedy Fiori cannot have her. I will kill him first.

And as he came within sight of Adriana's house, he dared to breathe a little easier. But Adriana was not at home. *Dio mio*, Alfredo thought in panic, is it possible she has already gone away with Fiori? Do not let it be so, he prayed wildly. He ran on blindly and thus he did not see fat Fiori coming towards him until he nearly knocked him down.

"Fiori," he blurted out in surprise. And when he had regained his balance he grasped the thick, soft throat and squeezed it savagely. "Where is she?" he demanded hoarsely. "What have you done with her?"

Fiori's eyes bulged white with terror in the vastness of his face. "In the fields," he gasped weakly.

Alfredo loosened his grip on Fiori's throat and raced towards Adriana's bit of tilled land. He pushed through the tall wheat, jumped over the tomato plants, and stumbled onto the potato patch. And then he saw her. She was bent over, on her knees, struggling with the hard earth for possession of the plump potatoes.

Alfredo's eyes clung to Adriana for a long moment while all his love ached within him. Her hair kept falling over her face streaked grimy with dust and sweat; her bare legs were red with scratches and stained with the brown earth. Even so, he thought, she is still beautiful, and once again he was filled with longing. Softly he whispered her name.

Adriana's hands ceased their movement and her back arched straight as though to listen to a voice she had never dared hope to hear again. Alfredo ran to her, knelt beside her, and gently lifted her hands, stained with the brown earth. He brought them to his lips and kissed them.

"Oh, Adriana, my beloved," he cried. "You may yet be the death of me, but I cannot live without you."

Adriana looked at him — her eyes laughing and yet crying. "Alfredo! Oh, Alfredo, I wanted to die. I thought you would not come back."

Alfredo rubbed his cheek against her face, wet with tears and sweat. "I could not stay away, *carissima*," he whispered softly. "I have come back and I swear we will be happy."

There was a persistent tug at his trousers and Alfredo turned and saw black-buttoned eyes smiling brightly up at him. "Yes, Adriana," he laughed gaily, as he swung the Englishman's son high in the air. "We will be happy — you and I and our *piccoli bambini*."



# THE ANTI-VIVISECTION NONSENSE

BY LOUISE CROSS

**B**ILLY was a "blue baby." That is, he was born with the arteries carrying blood from the heart to the lungs too small to discharge the full load of waste picked up from the body; too small to collect enough oxygen to make the blood rich and red with nourishment needed by muscles, organs and nerves. Because his blood was poor and blue, Billy was blue all over, thin, weak, and failing steadily. In desperation his father and mother had sold their Iowa farm, packed up Billy and his older brothers and sisters, and gone to California to seek health for the baby. They found the famous doctor they wanted, but the operation that might save Billy was new, only recently developed on a dog, and performed on very few children. The doctor didn't dare try it on Billy until he had first worked out the technique on a dog. He ordered two; but, thanks to the activities of the anti-vivisectionists, none could be found.

Billy caught cold. Time passed, and his condition grew more and more serious. Finally, two dogs were located. The doctor operated on the first, which died. But the second lived, and following the procedure he had developed on the second dog, the doctor operated on Billy. As the weak blood vessel was connected with the aorta, the great artery leading from the heart, Billy's skin flushed pink with new life. He was saved, soon to be as husky as any other little boy.

And Billy's father? All this time he had had a job — killing a hundred dogs a day in the city pound by injecting them with strychnine. The local "humane" society refused to allow these dogs to be used to save Billy's, or anyone else's, life, preferring instead to prescribe a painful death by poison for the animals.

This is just one story. All over the country, what used to be considered a harmless, sentimental, ill-informed cult is jeopardizing human life and impeding scientific progress. Out of

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77 accredited medical colleges in the United States — and this figure does not include pure research institutions or the laboratories of some of the leading pharmaceutical firms — only 25 are receiving animals, from twenty local authorities. Six colleges get them from humane societies, two act as city pounds and one buys at auction from the police department. Only about a dozen obtain really adequate supplies of animals either for research or teaching.

From the rest come very different reports. Columbia, Cornell, New York University, and other world-renowned research centers in New York, are all handicapped for lack of animals. According to law in New York state, all dogs in towns of over 5000 population are licensed by the ASPCA, and all strays are collected in their shelters to be destroyed in the gas chamber if unclaimed. New York, like Michigan and several other states, has very adequate and specific laws protecting animals from any sort of abuse. Penal law 408, Section 185, exempts animals needed for scientific studies from such of its restrictions as would interfere with properly conducted experiments. The Commissioner of Health is empowered under this law to approve the use of animals by laboratories that can show a real need for them. Such approval can legally be given only if the animals

are properly cared for and guarded against avoidable pain. Laboratories are open to inspection by the qualified authorities, including representatives of the ASPCA.

What is the attitude of the ASPCA? It refuses to allow any animals under its jurisdiction to be used for scientific studies, yet officially claims that it takes no stand on vivisection. Contradictory? We think so. It justifies its attitude on the ground that it is afraid of losing the donations of certain "fanatical" members. Let's look at the facts. Membership fees and donations to the ASPCA in New York in 1948 amounted to \$40,-145.75. Their main single source of income was from dog licenses, \$385,-175.00. Contrast this with \$8 million recently collected for Bellevue — New York University Medical Center — only one of the many great hospitals and research centers in the city. Consider also that, according to a University of Chicago national survey, 85 per cent of Americans believe in animal experimentation. In the light of these facts, the ASPCA's fear of losing the support of the fanatics is a little ludicrous. It seems logical to think that cooperation with medical research laboratories would increase, rather than decrease, donations.

Consider also what would happen if the dogs were sold to laboratories

instead of destroyed. In 1948, 76,536 stray dogs were destroyed in New York and Philadelphia, and 292,000 in the entire country. It is estimated that 10 per cent of these dogs would be adequate for all research requirements in the country in 1949. Institutions are now paying between \$1.50 and \$8.00 for experimental dogs. Thus, if we take an average price of \$4.00 for each dog, the strays of New York and Philadelphia would bring in about \$30,000 and those in the whole country about \$120,000. Medical colleges report that vivisection is now costing them \$175,000 a year, so that their expenditure on dogs does not seem excessive. Hence, it seems likely that ASPCA donations lost from fanatics would be easily made up by sale of dogs to scientific institutions. Many individual members of the ASPCA are themselves prominently engaged in scientific research and approve animal experimentation if properly conducted.

## II

The situation in California is even more of a muddle. Only the Hearst papers in the entire United States back the anti-vivisectionists, which is somewhat ironical since Hearst's attending physician has been doing outstanding research, with the use of dogs, in one of the leading medical institutions of California. The director

of this institution has twice had shots fired into his home by anti-vivisectionist cranks. After they were arrested, other anti-vivisectionists continued the campaign with threatening telephone calls. Then, in January 1949, through the efforts of "Sally Moody and her Animal Allies," all animal experiments in the county were stopped by a newly passed anti-vivisection law. She is now collecting signatures in an effort to extend this law to the entire state. Already California colleges are experiencing difficulty in getting animals for research because of the anti-vivisectionists. The University of California Medical School reports that "it is virtually impossible to plan new research projects involving the use of larger animals."

Ohio State University College of Medicine needs at least twice as many animals as it can get. Two of its projects, one for the National Safety Council and one for the Aero-Medical Laboratory at Wright Field, were at a standstill for a month due to anti-vivisectionists. This story, too, has ironic overtones. During the last academic year, the university spent about \$1800 on dogs. At the same time, Franklin County collected an indeterminate number of stray dogs which were turned over to the humane society and kept in their dog shelter in Columbus. The humane

society was paid for keeping these dogs and finally electrocuting them. Taxpayers would have been saved at least \$5000 if the stray animals had been turned over to the medical college for use. Even the United States Food and Drug Administration in Washington is short about 600 dogs for necessary studies, and handicapped for lack of cats!

The legal status of vivisection varies from state to state. A year ago, thirteen sanctioned it, seven prohibited it, and eleven exempted animals required for scientific studies from at least some of the anti-cruelty provisions. Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska and Colorado, as well as several cities, are now considering laws that will at least ease the animal shortage. Anti-vivisectionists are, of course, fighting them tooth and nail.

It is hardly necessary to underline the seriousness of this situation. Most Americans believe in animal experimentation and most are aware of the fact that much of the phenomenal medical progress of recent years is due, to some extent, to such studies. But a few dramatic reminders are not out of place.

The National Society for Medical Research estimates that 50 million people owe their lives to animal studies of the last hundred years. Seventeen million diabetics are now

alive because Banting and Best tested insulin on their dog, Margery. The hideous agony of surgery without anesthetic is gone forever because William Morton dared try ether on his dog after his friend, Horace Welles, had committed suicide because he had killed a patient, trying to save him pain with gas before its full potentialities were known. In New York City, deaths from the ghastly suffocation of diphtheria fell from 2015 in 1903 to 6 in 1948 because a long series of animal studies produced a serum made from horses, which confers 99 per cent immunity on children today. As far back as 1877, Pasteur and Joubert knew that some molds interfered with bacteria. Great numbers of them proved more or less effective in the laboratory test tube, but when they were given to animals they died. Penicillin was the first to pass the test, and after years of further studies, it was finally judged safe for humans. Today, of the 600 drugs in the United States pharmacopeia, 275 are either regularly tested on animals, made from animals, or were originally developed by animal experimentation. According to law, no new drug can now be added until it has been proved safe by animal experimentation. Others have to be standardized regularly, partly by animal studies to insure dependable potency and purity.

## III

Just who are the anti-vivisectionists who so violently oppose scientific progress? Most people consider them sentimental, ignorant, well-meaning, but harmless. But scientists who deal with them have found this description applies as a rule only to the vague border-line supporters. The leaders belong only too often to quite different categories, which would be considered today as neurotic. First is a type who, because of early tragic experience with people, is filled with terrible hatred or fear of human beings, and who transfers all his normal capacity for love to animals. Here are samples of letters from some of these, written to scientists:

You can help poor suffering humanity most by leaving the loveliest creature that God ever created to enjoy life the best he can — and concentrate your rotten efforts on poor suffering humanity itself. The world would be better off without two-thirds of the rotten creatures that walk this earth and think they are superior beings, and you would sacrifice a dog to save their lives.

What makes you think suffering humanity wants to be helped in this manner? There is nothing dreadful about death — the dreadful comes when some scientist has concocted some scheme for prolonging life when a person is ready to die.

You fancy yourselves men, I am a woman. But my great pleasure would be the experiment to end all experiments, and this would be made on you. (I know a number of places on your bodies which might be most sensitive to pain.) I wonder if you would react to my satisfaction? Would you feel pain as horribly as it is possible to know pain? Would you remain conscious the correct length of time? Would we learn anything new in the art of torture? And wouldn't we rid mankind of the lowest form of all life?

Today we treat mental cases with the same kindness that we give to those with physical illnesses. But we do not go to them for advice on matters of life and death.

The second type is the cultist who is merely confused, remote from reality, and rather generally anti-science because he has no idea what it is all about. Here is a statement from a "vibrant anti-vivisectionist":

I have no initials or degrees to place after my name. But I do have a revelation which could change the course of human events. A molder of astral forms on inner planes of nature showed me the soul of a dog — so nearly like man's that I gasped. The brilliant soul of human form told me it was so beautiful because I had given it so much love when it was a dog. The second form, therefore, was the evolutionary achievement of the first, which, scientifically speaking, is ac-

complished by first, consciousness of the heterogeneous absorption and change, then by molding on the spiritual plane.

Last come the appeals to the vague sympathizer, couched mainly for the tear-filled eye. An article entitled "Beware of Giving your Heart to a Dog to Tear" begins: "I was swept into a sudden freshet of tears." Another article, entitled "My Dog is Dead," includes this: "I guess we all cried when Ginger did not breathe any more. We none of us cried audibly — just moistly. It was really our hearts that cried."

Naturally, the propaganda of such people is not reliable. Scientific articles are, of course, misused, since they simply are not understood. But there are other abuses of fact which are less easily explained. One of the most astounding is their fantastic marshaling of "scientists" who believe in anti-vivisection. On investigation, one "doctor" turns out to be an 80-year-old Browning scholar, a Ph.D. not an M.D. Two often-quoted doctors, Thomas Watson and George Wilson, cannot be found on any list of American or English physicians. Dr. Arthur V. Allen, whose name heads many anti-vivisection pamphlets, is a very old man, trained before most medical schools taught animal experimentation. Noted physicians are quoted, but out of context and often after

death. Dr. Frederick Treves, for instance, wrote in 1889 that one set of animal experiments he had performed had not assisted him in his study of intestinal surgery. As he himself made clear, the failure of one study could hardly be considered an indictment of the entire subject. "No one," he protested, "is more keenly aware than I am of the great benefits conferred upon humanity by certain researches carried on by means of vivisection." The Harvard professor, Dr. Bigelow (1818-1890), once objected vigorously to an inhuman type of animal experimentation done in a particular French veterinary college before the days of anesthesia. This protest has been widely used by anti-vivisectionists, despite the fact that Dr. Bigelow was very active in establishing the physiological laboratory at Harvard, which from its inception has used animals to secure information vital to human welfare. This is capped by a long and variegated list of persons usually eminent in some field but not celebrated as judges of modern scientific experimentation: Victor Hugo, Lotte Lehman, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Rudy Vallee, and a formidable collection of religious writers. A politician, Lambert Fairchild, even went so far as to say, "the strongest upholders of vivisection are the Communists!"

One of the most unjust of anti-

vivisection claims is that animal experimentation is cruel. Everyone conversant with animal research knows that unless animals are kindly treated and well cared for, they are not cooperative, and experiments simply cannot be performed. It is also well known that unless surgical procedures are carried out exactly as they would be on human beings, the experiment is valueless as a test of what can be done for human beings. Conditions must be closely comparable.

Those who know them find scientists in general about as humane as any group of people anywhere; indeed the animals they use often become great pets. The writer, as a medical illustrator, has attended many operations and clinical procedures on persons as well as animals. She can add her testimony to that of countless competent observers that these things are not the tortures the anti-vivisectionists describe. She has herself watched animals in clean light cages, warm, well-fed, well-exercised, and cared for by animal lovers. The animals usually have the same friendly way with humans as have ordinary

pets. There are exceptions that are unavoidable, but which are accepted by scientists as the lesser of two evils. After all, few of us would say, as did one group of religious fanatics: "I would not have one mouse painfully vivisected to save the greatest human being or the life dearest to me."

There is also the pathetic but utterly fallacious picture of scientists using the stolen pets of children for vivisection. There have been a few unfortunate occurrences, but they are rare. When a laboratory cannot get animals from the local pound, it has to get them from professional animal dealers. Reputable dealers get their dogs from the pounds of small towns not covered by ASPCA laws, or they buy up surplus farm cats. A dealer who steals is usually caught quickly enough.

From all of these facts emerges a basic question. Are these unbalanced propagandists, these dreamers of astral bodies, these maudlin sentimentalists, to determine the future of medical research? Or are we going to back the scientist in studies we approve in the cause of human welfare?



# THE WOES OF A POETRY EDITOR

BY STANTON A. COBLENTZ

A CERTAIN magazine reader, being in the home town of his favorite periodical and having time to spare, decided to pay an unannounced call upon the editor. He was a little surprised when the taxicab driver dully admitted that he had never heard of *Ascension*, *A Journal of Poetry*, and seemed in doubt as to the location of the very street. And he grew more astonished minute by minute as he was driven toward a remote suburb. There, in a rambling street of one-story houses, he dismounted before a cottage a little more ancient-looking than most, and, thinking that some monstrous mistake had been made, doubtfully approached a man in overalls who, ankle-deep in mud, was sweating away with a spade at some leafless rooted horror.

"Hey there," he shouted, thinking he was addressing a hired laborer, "d'ye know where I can find Clifton R. Montrose, the editor of *Ascension*?"

The man looked up with a smile. "You're speaking to him," he said.

Ushered inside the cottage, the visitor did not find the sumptuous suite of offices he had pictured — not the ten or twelve typists clicking away distractedly, nor the frosted glass window bearing the legend, "EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Private." Instead, he saw one small room, dustily book-lined, with a battered old typewriter open on the desk, a few magazines and proof sheets strewn about promiscuously, an uncovered paste-pot, a letter file and one or two small card files, some press clippings littering the floor — and nothing else to hint of the expected editorial dignity.

The visitor may not have realized it, but this office was typical of the headquarters of poetry magazines throughout the land. Nevertheless, cramped in their single rooms, or at most in their two rooms, unable to afford paid stenographic or clerical aid, conducted by an editor or a pair of editors who fill every part down to that of chief stamp-licker and package-wrapper, these magazines have

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performed and continue to perform an invaluable service.

It is not too much to suggest that, if the fabled visitor from Mars were asked to name the strangest literary outgrowth of the twentieth century, he would point to the poetry magazines. Although the familiar Pegasus of our grandfathers is rumored to have died, a new Pegasus has been flying in its place — a Pegasus whose wings, mostly of midget size, take the form of eight- or sixteen-page leaflets, mimeographed sheets, hand-printed journals of an unmarked number of pages, and now and then professionally presented quarterlies of as many as 64 pages or more. This Pegasus, though struggling like an orphan in a world where it is about as much wanted as a female infant in China, has risen above handicaps to become one of the chief reasons why poetry in America, even if in precarious health, is alive at all today.

## II

A glance at the verse magazines of the present and past will give some idea of their mortal perils. Probably no insurance company, not even Lloyd's of England, would dare to issue a policy on the life of any of these delicate beings; their tables of vital statistics, if any were ever compiled, would show a life expectancy of no more than a year or two. Where

now, for example, are *Nebulae*, *Renegade*, *L'Alouette*, and the *Tramp*? Where are the *Buccaneer*, the *Lyric West*, the *Spinners*, *Star-Dust* and *Poetry Presents*? Where are the *Lone Wolf*, *Shards*, *Decimal*, *Chameleon*, *Dynamo*, and *Universal Poetry Magazine*? These and hundreds like them are one with the passenger-pigeon and the dodo. Yet all these were obtainable (if you looked hard enough) some time within the past twenty years.

Not that the breed seems threatened with immediate extinction. A market list, published by a writers' journal early in 1949, describes the requirements of no less than 62 of these small media. And a few more of them, shy violets that they are, may have remained so well hidden as to elude the census-taker.

The movement dates back to 1912, when Harriet Monroe, perhaps not seeing herself as a modern giant-killer, established *Poetry* of Chicago. Apparently nothing inspires so well as a reckless example; various other magazines, with nondescript titles such as *Glebe*, *Others* and *Broom*, popped up in rapid succession. Their success was not such as to make the business managers of popular publications glare with envy: *Poetry*, the most prosperous of them all, was never able to bring its subscription list much over the Himalayan heights of

3000, and, in fact, required six years to reach even the moderate Alpine altitudes of 1400, despite a helping hand from donors and endowments and the cheers and shouts of the literary élite.

To the average verse editor, however, such figures might seem awe-inspiring. For the fact is that most of the poetry leaflets count their subscribers (if they have the heart to count at all) by the hundreds and not by the thousands; in some cases, the list might almost be enumerated on the editor's fingers. Therefore it should surprise no one to learn that 50 per cent of these publications perish during their first year, of pernicious anemia and public non-support.

But it is no small matter that a few do keep their publication dates season after season, year after year, almost with the punctuality of a bank issuing its monthly statements. *Poetry* of Chicago, under various editorships and supported by various endowments, and despite various symptoms of an early demise, has never ceased its monthly appearances; Harold Vinal's *Voices*, first a bi-monthly and later a quarterly, has been published continuously ever since 1921, though it too has more than once had to pass between its Scylla and Charybdis; the *Lyric*, of Roanoke, Virginia, has likewise survived ever since 1921, under

three successive editorships; the *Lantern*, of Brooklyn, New York, dates back to the fall of 1926; *Sonnet Sequences*, of Washington, D. C., has been sending forth its thin, well printed sheafs ever since June 1928; *Kaleidograph* (originally the *Kaleidoscope*) has been faithfully distributed from Dallas twelve times a year for nineteen years; *Wings* has been coming out quarterly ever since the spring of 1933; and *Talaria*, three years younger, has long been making its regular flights from Cincinnati.

Where there is such fidelity of purpose despite difficulties like those of an ant trying to move a boulder, there must be some powerful incentive, some compulsion, some need.

### III

The editor of a poetry magazine must be a man of mulish pertinacity. He has not been long at his job when he realizes that he is regarded as a sort of unofficial (and unsalaried) public servant, at the beck and call of all who have ever rhymed "hope" and "dope." Some of his visitors, like our caller upon *Ascension*, come out of simple good will or curiosity; but others leave book-length manuscripts, after wordy explanations of the respects in which they differ from the masterpieces of Keats and Shakespeare. Again, he will be favored with a lengthy letter from the old lady who

used to do his mother's sewing back in good old Centerville: her granddaughter has written some "simply gorgeous" poetry which the wicked editors seem to have formed a conspiracy not to publish — she is sending a few dozen samples, which he can have free of charge, just for old times' sake. No easier to deal with is the barber whose shop used to be across the street from his father's: he has been passing his spare time writing free verse that explains what's wrong with the world; maybe it isn't exactly poetry, but it only amounts to a couple of hundred pages, so he's sending it right along, and will expect to be told "at your earliest convenience" just what publisher will pay the most for it.

But the editor is still more exasperated when he is aroused out of his sleep at 10.30 P.M. by a telephone call from a stranger who introduces himself as "Mr. McGroarty, a poet," and continues, "I've just written a sonnet, which I'd like to read to you, if you don't mind." The bleary-eyed editor minds this a great deal. He also minds quite a bit when at 2 o'clock on a bright Sunday afternoon, just as he is about to set out on a long-awaited outing with the family, he is greeted over the telephone by a woman whose name he cannot identify. "I've got some poems to show you; I'll be right over," he hears her rattling, ner-

vously; and even as he begins shouting a protest into the instrument, he hears her receiver snapping back into place and foresees the end of the day's outing.

After issuing four or five numbers, the editor questions sadly if there is anyone in the country who doesn't write verse. Although the financial returns are no lure to the greedy (most of the magazines pay only in occasional small prizes), the competition for space in the poetry journals is something like the rush of tenants for a vacant apartment in an area of housing shortage. As he ploughs his way through the arid dunes of manuscripts, the editor wonders why some of the rejected think it worth while to storm his fortress time after time; and why some, in their eagerness, bolster their manuscripts with incidental inducements, in the shape of letters as long as a magazine article, wherein they list their accomplishments and family history, down to the teething of the latest grandchild.

Sometimes, it appears, verse-writing is a secret sin, as with the small-town writer who urges, "If you use my work, please pick a *nom de plume*. I'm a policeman, and the folks at home mustn't know I write poetry." And sometimes it is almost a defiantly flaunted merit, as with the correspondent who none too archly notifies the editor, "I've waded through

the junk that cluttered up your last issue. If you want something that strikes you in the eye, just have a squint at the enclosed sequence, *Squashes and Catacombs*." Occasionally such an author makes rejection doubly sure by offering a not over-subtle bribe: "If this poem is accepted, please enter my subscription." Schoolgirls who append "Age 12" to their names, great-grandmothers who write, "Now that I'm approaching eighty, I realize that my life-work lies in poetry," parents who celebrate the superlative offspring, physicians renowned in their profession but clinging to poetry as an avocation, ministers and college professors, proprietors of dry-as-dust private businesses, botanists and ornithologists, the postman on his route, the clerk behind the counter, the gardener among his potted plants, the owner of vineyards or orange groves, the worker in a railroad watchtower, the drudge in a title examiner's office, the housewife, the accountant, the private secretary, even the itinerant singing on city streets for his flung pennies — all these turn out to be disciples of the Muse, and place their offerings humbly or ostentatiously before the poetry editor.

The verse magazines are nothing if not individualistic; they differ as widely in type as the varieties of

cheese or buns. Some would doubtless have pleased the contemporaries of Wordsworth or Tennyson; others specialize in that "advanced" work which reads as well backwards as forwards. A few keep monthly appointments with the printer; the majority turn up every two or three months; an occasional one seemingly is published on the "whenever-we-feel-like-it" basis. Many announce a board of "sponsors" or "patrons"; others, not so blessed, resort to various self-defeating plans, such as to require that all contributors be subscribers, or to demand a paid membership in a "society" whose only evident function is to collect fees. But a minority do struggle along unaided by any revenues except from regular sales and subscriptions. It is barely possible, though about as easy as to grow roses in a bed of stones, for a magazine so to support itself — that is, if the editor doesn't mind dipping into his pocket for the first few years, and is content to reckon his time and services at forty cents an hour less than the national minimum wage.

#### IV

Despite obstacles that sprout as abundantly as cacti in a southwestern desert, the poetry magazines have been the stairways along which some of our best known poets have climbed to success. David Morton, Witter

Bynner, Robert P. Tristram Coffin, Robert Hillyer, John Gould Fletcher, Clement Wood, Margaret Widdemer, and the late Jessie B. Rittenhouse and Arthur Davison Ficke are only a few among the more prominent poets whose names may be seen from time to time in recent verse magazines. More than that; it is probable that many would never have emerged at all except for these magazines: one can mention Vachel Lindsay, Eunice Tietjens, and Jesse Stuart as examples selected almost at random.

And the reason for this is obvious: the general periodicals publishing meritorious verse can absorb but a fraction of the supply, and the poetry magazines consequently provide the writer with an outlet and an audience. At the same time, they offer him contact with other writers, occasional helpful criticism, and — most important of all — a prod and encour-

agement to continue. And that is why, taken as a group, these magazines constitute one of the chief factors keeping poetry in America alive. And that also is why the poetry editor, despite mounting costs unmatched by mounting subscriptions, despite the slings and arrows of outrageous rhymesters laying siege to his door, and despite the fact that his labors may devour his leisure and his peace of mind no less than his bank account, may doggedly keep on and refuse to abandon the unruly beast he embraced in his more innocent earlier days.

Even though on midget wings, his Pegasus does have the power of flight. And some “mute inglorious Milton,” who may be found any day on Main Street or Broadway, may turn out to be no longer mute or inglorious when he has mounted that capricious steed.

## PERSPECTIVE

BY LILLIAN EVERTS

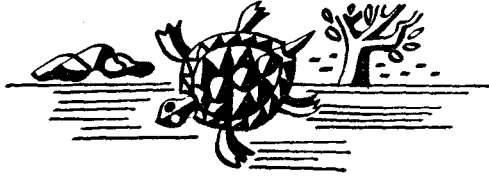
All things that live and breathe retain their bloom  
although their roots are fated to decline,  
even as the scent within a room  
although the hour had passed that served the wine.

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# DOWN TO EARTH

by ALAN DEVOE

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## THE WORLD OF ANTS

AS WAS remarked here last month, it is not possible for us, even by the most passionate effort of the instructed imagination, to enter fully inside an animal: to see with its eyes, hear with its hearing, feel with its feelings, and experience the life-adventure after its mode of experience. After all, the most accomplished novelist, of the sharpest acumen and most insighted sympathy, cannot put himself in the shoes, exactly, even of another human character; and the life-experience of one human being is much more like the life-experience of another human being than either of them is like the life-experience of, say, a worm that “sees” with its skin and that has a sex-life simultaneously male and female. It is difficult for us imaginatively to become another person; it is still more difficult to slip in fancy inside an animal, and feel the earth with its hairy paws and sniff the wind

with its keenly quivering nostrils.

Such an inter-personality journey is difficult even when the creature we try to become is one of the relatively “human” animals: a deer, a crow, a household dog. We are made to realize how very little, really, we know about the living psyches even of these familiar animals, from the inside looking out; and we are made to pause by the immense evidence suggesting their possession of curious faculties and singular kinds of awareness not readily to be discerned, or deciphered, in the laboratory.<sup>1</sup> To “become” one of the lower creatures — a fish, a snake, the promethea caterpillar creeping across a lilac leaf — taxes us still more. We have to reduce ourselves to something like our foetal consciousness, and then imagine such nearly unimaginable things as sensing the temperature through facial pits (as vipers do) and sensing the presence of

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<sup>1</sup> See “Nature-Fakes (Or Are They?),” AMERICAN MERCURY, July 1949.

unseen rocks by changes in the water-pressure against a "median line" along our sides (as fishes do). When we come to trying to project ourselves inside one of the social insects — a bee, an ant — imagination breaks down entirely and we are undone.

What is it like to be an ant? We are powerless to say. By a combination of scientific knowledge, field observation, careful introspection into our own young childhood, and a mighty effort of the thus-instructed imagination, we can at least partially think ourselves into the state-of-being of an antelope or an airedale. But not an ant.

Cut off a man's head and he dies immediately. Cut off a bird's, and it can live only a little while. Even a decapitated snake can wriggle and thresh for only a few hours. But an ant, with its head cut off, has been known not only to live, but to go with only somewhat impaired efficiency about its complicated ant-rituals, for something like six weeks. An ant has, for an insect, an enormous anterior brain, over the oesophagus. Under the oesophagus it has also a second brain, or brain-portion, connected with the first. And yet, with all this lopped away, it may still act. How? On the nerve-cord that runs along an ant's body there are nodes at each segment, and from each node go nerve-fibers actuating that segment.

Each node is, so to speak, an independent brain. Remove one brain; the neighbor-brain can still act. Remove the whole major brain-mass in the head, and the ant's life-activity is taken over by a rally of all its other lesser "brains." It is somewhat as though, after you or I had been decapitated, a ganglionic mass in our hand still "knew" how to write a letter, and another spinal mass still knew how to set our legs to walking us homeward, and yet another brain-center somewhere around the shoulder-blades could still see to it that we managed to put on our coats.

In such primitive creatures as worms, to be sure, this kind of non-integration of the nervous system is common. An earthworm's "brains" are no more than a loose association of nerve-centers, each working a different body-area; so that a worm may be cut in pieces and each piece function indefinitely as an individual worm. But a worm's life is not complex. It is so simple and sluggish and restricted — so lacking in anything like problems or strategies — that it scarcely occurs to us to impute consciousness to a worm at all. On the anatomical evidence, however, an ant's anterior brain has developed as a major center of mentality, in the manner of our own; and on the behavior-evidence — the evidence of the way ants solve their problems, and

organize their society, and generally go about the intricate business of being ants — we are led nearly irresistibly to suppose that to be an ant is to be the entertainer of a certain life-awareness, however alien to the human. When, however, we try to get inside this presumptive state of antness, when we try to look out from behind the big compound eyes with which an ant contemplates its world, and when we try to participate in the ant's experiences of taste and touch, we find ourselves defeated. Just as we cannot imagine our head-brain supplemented by smaller brains, ready to substitute for it, so we cannot imagine a visual experience in which the retinal image, instead of being inverted as ours is, is the other way around; and in which, the moment a watched object stops moving, it becomes invisible. That is what sight is like (as best we can put it into words at all) for ants. If their sight-experience is unimaginable to us, their taste-experience is even more so. Ants do not have, separately, a sense of smell and a sense of taste and a sense of touch. What they have is a fused "topochemical" sense. All over its feelers are delicate organs giving an ant simultaneously impressions of odor-taste and of tactility. It is as though — (words necessarily break down and fail here) — we were to experience triangularity as acid, or were

to think of sweetness as particularly circular.

Men like Lubbock, Wheeler, Haskins and Hingston have given lifetimes to studying ants: watching them in the field, experimenting with them in the laboratory, dissecting them, pondering upon them. Their researches have resulted in our knowing a great deal more about them than we knew a hundred years ago. But (as is the way with good science) the more that is known, the vaster stretch the vistas of what is not. The problem of what it must be like to be an ant becomes, in a sense, not easier but more difficult. For it has lately been found out (for instance) that ants are apparently blind entirely to the red and yellow portions of the spectrum that are visible to us, and — what makes the adventure of Imaginative Antness harder yet — that they perceive, and are influenced by, great ranges of color that lie outside our human perception completely. In the American Museum of Natural History there goes on continuously a devoted program of ant-study under the direction of Dr. Theodore G. Schneirla. Dr. Schneirla is one of the greatest living ant-experts, a dedicated scientist forever hopping to Central America for another field-session with army ants, hopping back to the Museum to try out a new ant-maze or a new ant psychology-test. Every now and



then he releases a statement on the progress of his investigations. He released one the other day. A great many of ants' behaviors, he has found it likely, are not rightly ascribable to factors previously thought operative. They are tied, instead, to fluctuations in the weather. And the great foundation upon which an ant-culture rests seems to be the emanation of a particular chemical odor from the queen.

## II

A natural history of ants cannot be written in less than a book, or preferably a shelf-full, for no two species of ants follow the same life-ways and the life-way of even *one* species is a subject big enough to preoccupy a myrmecologist all his days. It may be sufficient, to indicate the extraordinariness of ant-activities and to suggest the difficulty of penetrating inside ants' psyches, to mention a few ant-customs, often popularly supposed mythical, which are in fact very real and have long been studied.

There are ants that keep other insects as domestic cattle. They raise beetles, aphids, and altogether some three thousand other species of creatures, which are herded and stabled for the "milk" (which is to say the honeydew or whatever) they can be induced to give. The ants stroke and gentle their charges, inducing an

aphid, for instance, to furnish some forty-eight drops of rich fluid a day. Or again: there are ants that keep slaves. The colony sends out raiding packs; the eggs of another species are seized and carried to the home-nest; the young ants that hatch become, exactly speaking, the laborers for their captors. Or again: there are ants that cultivate gardens. The parasol ants bring millions of leaf-bits to their underground chambers, and prepare a rotted mulch in which they raise mushrooms. Every step of the operation, from the cutting and transportation of the leaf-bits to the maintenance of the fungus crop, which involves a constant and careful weeding by the smallest worker-ants who virtually never leave the nest, is of such a precision, such an expertness and apparent purposefulness, that an observer cannot avoid feeling he is watching something as intelligently integrated as the life of a human community. For such ages have the gardening ants raised and tended their special fungus, so completely have they acclimated it to domestication, that in a wild state it has actually become extinct.

It is such things as these — and there are millions of them, one as extraordinary as another — that we are up against when we contemplate the world of the ants and try to enter into it with understanding. All these

hordes of scurrying little creatures, bulbous-headed, thready-necked, peering out on a world of colors that are not our colors, feeling and tasting a world we do not feel and taste, being pushed and pulled by drives and impulses which our scientific imagination cannot even begin to conceive

. . . we look at all this, and we realize we are looking into far, far mysteries. It is as queer a thing to look into an ant-hill as to look, with an astronomer, into the distant dance of matter in the night sky, or to look, with a psychoanalyst, into the dark stir in the depths of our self.

## PHRASE ORIGINS—51

*ABRACADABRA: This favorite piece of magician's mumbo-jumbo made its first appearance in a Latin poem of the second century. It is thought to be related to the Greek abraxas, a cabalistic charm-word the Greek letters of which had a numerical value of 365. Among members of one of the Gnostic religious sects, according to whose theology the Supreme Being assumed exactly 365 different forms, abracadabra was inscribed on amulets designed to ward off agues and other fevers. For full enjoyment of its miraculous properties, the word had to be written in the following manner*

A B R A C A D A B R A  
A B R A C A D A B R  
A B R A C A D A B  
A B R A C A D A  
A B R A C A D  
A B R A C A  
A B R A C  
A B R A  
A B R  
A B  
A

*on a piece of paper folded in the form of a cross, suspended from the neck for nine days by a strip of linen so as to rest on the pit of the stomach and then, before sunrise, cast behind the wearer into a stream running to the east.*

LOUIS JAY HERMAN

## RADIOISOTOPE: "LABORATORY SPY"

BY DON WHARTON

THE strangest, and perhaps most important, factory in the world sits in a little valley ten miles inside the gates guarding the restricted area at Oak Ridge. In this odd-shaped, steel-sheaved building glittering with aluminum paint, is a nuclear chain-reacting pile cube-shaped, somewhat larger than the end of a boxcar, producing not fissionable material for bombs but radioactive materials for research. These materials are called radioisotopes. Conservative scientists, men who measure their words, say they are "the most useful new research tool since the invention of the microscope."

Radioisotopes have been given a number of nicknames: "tracers," "tagged atoms," "laboratory spies." These terms all derive from their tell-tale capacity to give away their presence through radiations detected by a Geiger counter. To Dr. Paul Aebersold, chief of the Isotopes Division of the Atomic Energy Commission, they represent a great extension of man's ability to "see" and to "sort."

At first we could see things only with our unaided eyes, sort them out only with our hands. Then came magnifying glasses and small tweezers. Later came the microscope. Now come radioisotopes, which enable us to "see" or follow smaller amounts of atoms than ever before and to sort out particular actions of atoms that could not be differentiated in any other way. According to Dr. Aebersold, radioisotopes now make it possible to detect the presence of as few as 10,000 atoms. How few that is may be visualized by considering that one grain of salt contains about 1000 billion billion atoms.

Inside the Oak Ridge factory all you see of the atomic pile is its heavy concrete face spotted with half a dozen square metal-plugged holes which look like closed wall vaults. Behind that wall, in a latticework of uranium and graphite, a chain reaction is going on similar to the chain reaction in an atomic bomb — only this one is slowed by graphite and controlled by rods of boron. In this

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chain reaction, neutrons, normally locked in the nucleus of each atom, are flowing in monstrous numbers: the rate throughout the entire pile is 1 trillion neutrons a second for each area the size of your little fingernail. Radioisotopes are ordinary chemical elements, such as iodine, carbon, cobalt, iron, which have been made radioactive by being placed in the pile and subjected to intense neutron bombardment for a week or a month or more.

The radioisotope factory operates somewhat like a bakery, with the pile an oven, cooking with a chain reaction rather than heat. Everywhere in the building Geiger counters are clicking away, counting radioactivity. Every worker wears a film badge checked weekly to find how much radiation he has picked up. He also carries a pocket meter, shaped like an oversize fountain pen, which is checked at the end of each day.

Before materials can be thrust into the pile for bombardment the chain reaction is stopped — otherwise the leakage through openings might be deadly. The target material is placed in small aluminum test tubes which fit into slots in a graphite block called a "stringer." This block is shoved into the pile by a technician using a long metal poker. Now the chain reaction is started again.

Monday is opening day at the pile.

The chain reaction is stopped, a lead tunnel on rollers is moved up to a pile opening, and the stringer is pulled into the lead tunnel. Technicians protected by lead bricks, working with mirrors, using special tongs, lift the tubes from their slots and lower them into lead safes which are later rolled into the shipping room.

## II

Since 1946, Oak Ridge has made more than 8000 shipments of radioisotopes. Today by plane, train and truck more than a hundred shipments are moving out each week. Their number is being doubled and redoubled every few weeks. Some radioisotopes are so "hot" that a single gram, about one thirtieth of an ounce, is packed in a lead shield inside a wooden box the size of a big trunk, the whole package weighing 240 pounds. Some are packed in concrete containers. A few, emitting weak rays, are shipped in small bottles in cardboard containers. About the smallest quantity ever shipped was a fortieth of a fluid ounce of a whitish salt solution containing seven billionths of a gram of radio phosphorus. You can visualize its minuteness this way: if every man, woman and child in the world were shipped that amount, the total weight would be less than half an ounce.

Before the Oak Ridge pile was con-

structed — as a pilot plant for the great Hanford atomic works on the Columbia River — some radioisotopes had been produced by scientists in atom-smashing cyclotrons. But the quantities were pitifully small, the cost prohibitive. Recently in a few weeks Oak Ridge produced as much radio carbon as could have been turned out by a thousand cyclotrons at a cost of \$100 million — against Oak Ridge's \$7200. Oak Ridge publishes a radioisotope catalogue: prices ranging from \$1.10 for a unit of radio phosphorus to \$2168 for Europium. Tight scheduling of production and shipment is necessary because some of the material has a short "half-life" — disintegrates quickly. Some radioisotopes have half-lives of only a fraction of a second; the shortest shipped by Oak Ridge is radio sodium with a half-life of 14.8 hours, which means that in 14.8 hours it emits half its rays. On the other hand, Carbon 14 has a half-life of 5000 years.

Here is what happens when an Oak Ridge shipment, say radio cobalt, reaches one of the 300 laboratories now using radioisotopes. A technician approaches the huge 240-pound box, wearing a plastic head shield, respirator, rubber apron, surgical rubber gloves and plastic wrist shields. He unfastens outside hinges, lifts off the box top, reaches inside for special tools which Oak Ridge sends out with each

package. With one long-handled instrument he removes the bolts from a four-inch-thick lead case. Then he lifts off the top of the lead case, takes up another tool to lift out a small aluminum tube, places it on a work table covered by a stainless steel tray. Now, working behind lead bricks and using another instrument, he unscrews the top of this tube, extracts a smaller aluminum tube. This is the tube that was in the Oak Ridge pile. He tears off a sealed cap and now in a mirror can see the black, powder-like substance which is radio cobalt.

Radioisotopes enable scientists to tackle problems that could not be attacked any other way. At first Oak Ridge gave a priority to medicine, and already this research tool has produced a small mountain of new medical knowledge. For instance, radio hydrogen enabled scientists to find that, in your body, water passes back and forth through the blood-vessel walls at the rate of about twenty barrels a day. Radio sodium showed that salt injected in one arm emerges in sweat from the other arm in 75 seconds. Radio iodine has been used to locate brain tumors *before* the surgeon's incision. Radio sodium has been used to study blood circulation, determine whether amputation is necessary or where to amputate.

One way in which agriculture is using the new tool is shown by an

experiment involving pecan trees. When they bear heavily in the spring, often many of the nuts later become defective as a result of insufficient phosphorus. To find how this element gets to the nuts the Department of Agriculture last year took radio phosphorus to a pecan grove in Georgia, put some in the soil at the roots of one tree and packed some into a hole bored in the trunk of another tree. Radio phosphorus behaves exactly like natural phosphorus — they are identical twins except that an atom of radio phosphorus has picked up an extra neutron in the Oak Ridge pile. Radioactivity is simply the disintegration of the extra neutron: a signal which a scientist using a Geiger counter can follow easily. By examining leaves and nuts the scientists found that phosphorus, when placed at the roots, did not go to that year's crop, but when packed in the tree trunk it went to nuts all over the tree.

## III

At the Beltsville experimental station in Maryland, radio phosphorus was added to a superphosphate compound until about one atom in a billion was active. This fertilizer, shipped to North Carolina, was applied to rows of cotton in five different ways. Then, by Geiger-counting the cotton plants when the leaves first emerged, at half-growth, and again at maturity,

the scientists found which technique got the most phosphorus into the cotton at the most important time. Similar work has been done on corn in Iowa. In Hawaii sugar cane has been fed a radioisotope to learn more about how the green leaves form cane sugar — fundamental knowledge which may bring increased production. In Ohio experimenters mixed a trace of radio phosphorus in 125 pounds of fertilizer spread on clover, later detected it in the hay, then in the milk of a cow fed on the hay, finally in the bones of a calf that drank the milk. Thus agriculture is using radioisotopes in scores of knowledge-building experiments which will eventually spell more food.

Some of industry's most significant uses are in fundamental research where the findings are highly technical. For 40 years it has been known that by adding certain chemicals the process of vulcanizing rubber could be speeded up. What once took three hours is now done in fifteen minutes, but still the rubber companies don't know exactly how these accelerators work. Their labs are now using radio sulphur to find out. Will this mean better and cheaper rubber? "Look where we've gone in our ignorance," the scientist answers. "We've done all this in the dark. Now in radioisotopes we have something to help us see."

DuPont is using radio sulphur to learn more about synthetic rubber.

Half a dozen large companies are using this research tool to get better metals. Our big oil companies are using radio carbon to learn more about making gas from coal. Laymen have been intrigued by talk of power from atomic energy, but this research tool may open up much more power by finding more efficient ways of converting coal into gas.

Radioisotopes have already increased our oil supply by making production more efficient. For instance, in a Pennsylvania well, where the natural pressure was depleted, a radioisotope was used to measure the rate at which water could force out the secondary oil. A common problem in cleaning out pipelines is that when the steel scraper, called a "go-devil," gets stuck in the line days are lost locating it. Recently the Pure Oil Company attached a cylinder containing radio cobalt to a go-devil scraping the 90-mile pipeline from Toledo to Detroit. While the go-devil moved inside the buried pipeline, forced along by pressure in the liquids, a Geiger counter detected the radiations coming through three feet of earth.

Socony Vacuum has used a radioisotope to solve a tricky problem of aviation gasoline. The refinery process involved drawing hydrofluoric acid from tanks twenty feet high and at all times knowing how much is in the

tanks. This acid is so corrosive that it will eat up the usual gauging devices. Formerly measurement was made by guessing from the pressure on the tank. Now an ingenious float containing a radioisotope moves up and down with the acid while a Geiger counter picks up the rays streaking through the tank's steel walls. Similarly, Ford Motor Company is using radio cobalt to measure molten metal in foundry cupolas.

In the Goodyear plant at Akron you can watch radio carbon at work on a production line. Here Pliofilm, used in packaging fresh vegetables, is rolling out in two-yard widths, a hundred feet a minute, a thousandth of an inch thick. Behind the rolling film a mechanical arm is sweeping back and forth, measuring the thickness, reporting variations one four-hundredth the thickness of this magazine paper. How? In a brass cup in the sweeping arm there is a fleck of radio cobalt shooting rays through the Pliofilm toward a Geiger counter. The number of rays getting through the film tells the thickness, which is continually shown on a meter as easy to read as the speedometer on your car.

#### IV

Last year Oak Ridge put a piston ring in the pile for a month, then air-expressed it to Standard Oil's Cali-

fornia laboratories. There the piston ring, some of its iron turned into radio iron, was mounted in a Diesel engine. Fresh oil was put in, the engine started. Then at intervals oil samples were drained out; when measured with a Geiger counter they disclosed the amount of metal that had worn off the rings. Instead of slow and costly testing methods, involving dismantling the engine several times, this new technique is quick, inexpensive and ultra-precise: for example, it can detect as little as one millionth of an ounce of metal worn from a piston ring. Eventually this extra knowledge about friction should lead to better lubricants.

A small New England firm, Krim-Ko, is apparently the first to use radioisotopes to buttress a sales talk. From Irish Moss, a red sea weed, this company extracts a powder used in cough syrups, toothpaste and hand lotions. Trying to induce a manufacturer to put it into his soap as a skin-softener, Krim-Ko bumped into the question of whether it remained on the skin after hands were rinsed and dried. Krim-Ko called in Tracerlab, Inc., of Boston, the nation's first firm with a business built entirely on by-products of the atom bomb. Tracerlab put radio iodine into the powder, mixed it with liquid soap, then had five men wash their hands

with the radioactive soap. When they had rinsed and dried their hands a Geiger count showed that half the skin-softener was still there. After more rinsing, drying and even washing with ordinary soap, the group found the skin softener still there.

Tracerlab is one of three companies which process radioisotopes for resale to industry in convenient compounds. Recently in Hoboken the United States Testing Company, in the testing business for more than half a century, set up a "hot lab" to do radioisotope research. It is getting data for one manufacturer on the life of a shoe polish. When a floor-wax manufacturer wanted accurate wearing information, U. S. Testing mixed radio cobalt in a wax, put a coating on a floor, and began taking Geiger counts at intervals. Recently a paint manufacturer wanted precise figures on how long it would take salt water to break through his marine paint and damage the hull of a ship. U. S. Testing, using radioactive salt water, secured accurate data rather than old-fashioned trial-and-error guesses.

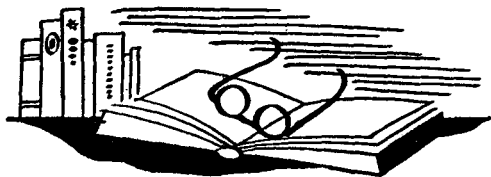
Some of these experiments may seem prosaic, but they all add to our knowledge and spell more and better goods. It is encouraging to report that little business, as well as big, can now benefit from our amazing new research tool.



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### THE EDUCATION OF HENRY ALDRICH

by *BEN RAY REDMAN*

FOR a good many years now, our American system of education has been subjected to critical attacks from within and without, and on all levels, from elementary to graduate schools. Educators have told one another, and the rest of the world, that they were failing at their jobs, while lay spokesmen have assured these same educators they were quite right. But general as the agreement has been that much is wrong with our education, there has been no agreement as to remedies.

Some of the prescribing doctors have recommended short-term palliatives (Howard Mumford Jones, for example, has proposed a program calculated "to get us through the next two or three decades"), while

others have sought to prescribe for eternity. Some have placed their faith in a return to the ways of our grandfathers; others have insisted that we would not be in the mess we are in today if our grandfathers had followed other courses. Some have said that our salvation lay in putting more and more young men and women through college, and others have replied that we were already trying to put through too many. As Robert Andrews Millikan has forcefully phrased it:

Instead of mercifully guiding away from college and university the nine tenths of the secondary-school population which has no chance of succeeding in the analytical pursuits for which the so-called higher educational system is supposed to train, we have taken down most of the bars between the secondary and higher systems and urged, almost driven, students to go right on and try to prepare themselves

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**BEN RAY REDMAN**, a regular *MERCURY* contributor, appeared here last month with an essay-review on Dreiser and Farrell. Recently he edited the *Viking Portable Voltaire*.

for pursuits in which there is no place for those of their endowments. It is the height of cruelty to the victim and his family and disastrous to the State, as indeed are all misfits, since they tend to undermine it through producing discontent and social unrest.

We have had educators who have attacked the problem as if it could be solved by the mere devising of new curricula, and we have had some who have dealt with it philosophically, with vision both broad and deep — like the late Hoyt H. Hudson, who equated education with “the full discourse of reason,” and identified its three positive, sanative forces as information, operative logic, and imagination. We have watched the clash between advocates of vocational training and proponents of the liberal arts, and have listened to those who would reconcile the two. We have noted the implacable disagreement between teachers who would develop faculties for general use, and those who say, with John Dewey: “To talk about training a power, mental or physical, in general, apart from the subject matter involved in its exercise, is nonsense.” And some of us have been sure that such a statement is nonsense.

Thirty-one years ago, Thorstein Veblen turned the bright light of his intelligence on the higher learning in America, and examined it with a view

to discovering how far its character was affected by its dependence on the financial support and supervision of successful businessmen. His words then found few readers. Four years or so after Veblen, Upton Sinclair trained his journalistic guns on the academic fortress, and, with the appearance of *The Goose Step*, the thunder of his experienced artillery was heard throughout the land. But Sinclair, for all his crusading talents, was a writer who was not taken seriously by a good many readers who took themselves seriously. And then, in 1930, Abraham Flexner published *Universities*, a study of higher education in the United States, England, and Germany.

## II

Flexner could not be ignored. He wrote with a scholar's accuracy, but he also presented his case with a vigor and a liveliness that assured him a popular hearing. Defining a university's functions in the light of high standards, he clearly demonstrated that our institutions of higher learning were guilty of grave sins. They had failed to maintain “a sound sense of values,” and as a result were prostituting themselves in an effort to satisfy ignoble and transient public demands. Not only were they busily providing vocational and technical training, instead of devoting them-

selves to their proper duties — “Intensive study of phenomena under the most favorable possible conditions — the phenomena of the physical world, of the social world, of the aesthetic world, and the ceaseless struggle to see things in relation” — but, because of the failure of the secondary schools, they were spending much of their time teaching freshmen and sophomores subjects that should have been taught in high school.

It was often possible, of course, for the determined student to obtain an excellent education, while enjoying peerless library and laboratory facilities, but he was sure to find himself distractingly surrounded by a mob of college mates who had come to college for anything but education. Despite the exceptions, wrote Flexner, “it is still true that American college students are, at the close of four years, intellectually considered an unselected and untrained body of attractive boys and girls, who have for the most part not yet received even a strenuous secondary school training.”

These were harsh words for believers in mass education — for taxpayers, trustees, and contributors to endowment funds — to read. But harsher still was the statement that “no nation has ever so completely deceived itself” as to the quality of its educational achievement. And most

shocking of all, perhaps, was the flat declaration that, “Fifty years ago, the degree of Ph.D. had a meaning in the United States; today it has practically no significance.” How could it mean anything when the University of Chicago had given the degree for a thesis on “Variations in Demand for Clothing at Different Income Levels”? And how could one attach definite meaning to a master’s degree when the same university had granted this distinction for theses on “Trends in Hosiery Advertising” and “A Time and Motion Comparison on Four Methods of Dishwashing”?

Abraham Flexner refused to provide us with any easy answers. Others, then or later, might come forward with guaranteed panaceas, or with short-term plans such as that proposed by Howard Mumford Jones, in 1946, which would pull us through the next few decades by having our colleges concentrate on a curriculum consisting of six parts: professional vocation for all; the study of the theory of science and of the application of scientific discoveries to our technology; the assumptions and workings of representative government, particularly in the United States and in the British Commonwealth of Nations; the study of Russia; the study of the Orient; and the study of personal relationships in modern society. (Perhaps it should be

noted that Mr. Jones, who believes that "the primary conflict of our time is the revolt against the results of twenty centuries of western culture," at one point asks the remarkable question: "What has Shakespeare or Emerson to tell us about the validity of personal relationships?") But Abraham Flexner, having no truck with panaceas or palliatives, was content to assure us that "there is no possibility of a summary solution of the problem of higher education in America — or, for the matter of that, of education at any level; we lack teachers, facilities, standards, comprehension, and the willingness to accept differences."

Now, almost two decades after the drawing up of the Flexner indictment, we have before us *A Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education*, which was originally prepared in six short volumes and then published, last year, in a single volume by Harper & Brothers, under the title, *Higher Education for American Democracy*. It is an interesting document in many ways, well worth study. Robert M. Hutchins has justly remarked that there is something in it for everybody, and has observed: "The educational system is taken as given. It may be wasteful and shoddy. But let us expand it, even if that means that it will be more wasteful and shoddier, and all will be well."

This may be something of a simplification of the Commission's attitude, but it is essentially fair. It is true that the *Report* notes that our colleges and universities have, for many years, "been healthily dissatisfied with their own accomplishments, significant though these have been"; and notes further that "the failure to provide any core of unity in the essential diversity of higher education is a cause for grave concern." It is true that the Commission says that we need "a schooling better aware of its aims," and colleges which "see clearly what it is they are trying to accomplish." And it is true again that the Commission finds our college graduates unprepared for the duties of citizenship and apathetic in the performance of civic duties.

But what most impresses the reader of the *Report* is that it displays more interest in the expansion of the present system than in its reformation. The basic assumption is that if we can give all young Americans an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of this system we shall make our country a better and happier place. What if it is generally agreed that students, through the years, are entering college with a steadily decreasing amount of knowledge? The answer to that is to push more and more students through the same old mill. There must be quantitative and qualitative

improvements in teaching staffs, of course, but it is even more "imperative that American education develop a 'democratic dynamic' that will inspire faith in the democratic way of life, dispel doubt and defeatism about the future, and imbue youth with the conviction that life has high purpose and that they are active and responsible participants in that purpose."

More than this, all young Americans must be educated for world citizenship. (The *Report* does not add that this is a duty and a privilege which Americans will hardly be able to enjoy unless young Russians, Indians, Germans, and all the rest of the world's youth, are similarly trained.) As for pessimists of the Millikan stripe, who believe that nine tenths of the secondary school population have no place in college, the answer to them is that we should, in the near future, double the student load in higher education — for reliable tests have conclusively shown that "at least 32 per cent of our population has the mental ability to complete an advanced liberal or specialized professional education." The *Report* does not suggest how all these advanced students can be absorbed in our present, or any foreseeable, economy; but perhaps even to hint that any such absorption would not be easy is "undemocratic."

Obviously this ambitious program

can be financed from only one source — the Federal government — and the Commission makes it clear that "higher education is a proper concern of the Federal government," whose rôle as a partner of the states, in financing education, must be greatly strengthened and expanded. But even though Washington pays the piper, it must not be allowed to call the tune. No, indeed! It must stimulate and facilitate education, but abjure control. When and if the exercise of this restraint is practised, it will be a political and historical phenomenon well worth watching. In passing, and while speculating on Washington's future rôle in this field, it should be noted that in 1947, thanks mainly to tuition and other fees for veterans enjoying their bill of rights, "on the average all institutions of higher education, publicly and privately controlled, received well over one third of their current operating income during that year from the Federal government."

### III

The report of the President's commission can hardly provide happy reading for any thoughtful person, but even less delightful is the private report of Bernard Iddings Bell, the well known educator and clergyman whose *Crisis In Education* [\$3.00, Whittlesey House] is one of the most recent and

most vigorous condemnations of our educational errors.

Dr. Bell begins by adding his voice to the many observers who believe that our proud American nation is "composed chiefly of people who have not grown up, who think and act for the most part . . . with the immaturity and emotional impulsiveness of adolescents," and he places the burden of blame at the old familiar door. Our primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and graduate schools are all failing at their jobs — and have been for many years. The result is that the Aldrich family, of the popular radio program, are really representative Americans; their hopes and fears and values are those of the vast middle-class majority. It is a spectacle which Dr. Bell contemplates with horror, but not with despair. Perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich are beyond saving, but there is just a chance — despite all the active inimical forces, from public schools to comic books — that something may be done for the younger generation.

If it is to be done, the first essential is that our three character-moulding institutions — home, church, and school — "rediscover somehow that *democratic education must be not only democratic but also education.*" This may look like a truism, but Dr. Bell is right to drive his point home with italics, for it is a truism that is largely

ignored. The century of the Common Man has arrived, he says, but those who should be his guides and instructors are betraying the Common Man because, as educators, they are surrendering to his own immature desires and values. The masses are assuming power, but are not being trained to exercise it. If we are to educate the Common Man's children, we must "rid ourselves of the poisonous notions that children are at their best and happiest when encouraged to do as they please and that our ancestors were incompetent." Far from denying the validity of our Western traditions, we must give the progeny of the masses "some knowledge of the basic wisdom of the race." Teachers must "foster a sense of identification with the tried and tested customs and attitudes of our forefathers."

Dr. Bell believes in discipline. He believes in the rewards and deprivations which are so unfashionable among modern educators, for he knows that children cannot be persuaded to work hard, once they discover that the drone and the shirker are accorded the same treatment as their industrious brothers. He would reconcile advocates of liberal education and of vocational training by making them realize that both are parts of a single task, which should be pursued throughout life. He assumes that any sound education must be

built around a core of moral philosophy. And he is old-fashioned enough to quote with approval a report of the faculty of Yale College, dated 1829: "The two great points to be gained in intellectual culture are the *discipline* and the *furniture* of the mind; expanding its powers, and storing it with knowledge. The former of these is, perhaps, the more important of the two." He does not demand that we should adhere to — or return to — the curriculum of our fathers, but he does insist that "the older schools taught *their students to think* and that the newer schools mostly do not."

The cleavage that has been created between secular and religious learning is wholly deplorable to Dr. Bell, and it is inconceivable to him that there can be any sound education without religious instruction and experience. This training should have its place in schools and colleges, but a firm foundation for it should be laid in the home; and there, too, the child should be taught morals and manners. Indeed, the home should make a far greater educational contribution than it does now; one cause of our present troubles is that primary and secondary schools are being asked, and often asking, to carry a burden that is not properly theirs.

At this point one may wonder how Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich can be expected to educate their offspring in any way

whatsoever. And then one thinks of the depths of domestic ignorance and incompetence which lie far below the Aldrich level. And one wonders how Dr. Bell can declare that most of the young men and women now coming of age are not religious, and at the same time count on them to give their children religious instruction. But these questions are fractions of a larger argument to which I shall come a little later.

Speaking in terms of a concrete program, Dr. Bell proposes that we should have six years of grammar school instead of eight, four years of intermediate school, three years of college, and four years of professional and technical training. (The new grammar school would have to teach in six years what it now fails to teach in eight; so it is obvious that this plan presupposes a considerable improvement in teachers and teaching methods.) At the end of intermediate school — when the pupils would be about sixteen — there would be a weeding-out process: those who showed no aptitude for "intellectual disciplines" would be diverted into schools where they would receive training on manual lines, plus a necessary minimum of general education, while their more promising companions went on to college. Then, for the fit, there would be four years of professional and technical study. The

Federal government would, of course, have to finance much of the enterprise, including scholarships for the worthy; and because of this teachers should already begin to organize against the threat of regimentation.

At first glance, this program — although it is calculated to save the student about three years — seems neither particularly novel nor impressive. But it would be both if it could actually be put into effect, for this would mean that efficiency had replaced inefficiency, that discipline had filled the void left by lack of discipline, and that the process of differentiating between those fit for higher education and those unfit for it had reached a degree of perfection to which we are now strangers. Of course, Dr. Bell does not tell us precisely how this happy state of affairs is to be brought about, and he could hardly be expected to do so. Generally speaking, all we have to do is to correct the faults which he has pointed out so competently, and of which most of us are keenly aware.

Is that all? You may well ask the question ironically, and if you do, I am ready to agree that the task, if not impossible, is bound to prove very nearly so. Indeed, it is questionable whether or not such a sweeping reformation could be effected in our sprawling, multiform educational system, composed of innumerable inde-

pendent units, without bringing to bear upon it an external, superior power which would, in the very process of reformation and by the imposition of corrective force, destroy the liberty without which no educational system can be autonomous. Perhaps such a reformation by regimentation would merely complete a process which is already well under way. But if it is now in train, we should bend every effort to stop it dead in its tracks.

#### IV

How far Dr. Bell's practical program can be realized remains, then, problematical. But in the course of his arguments he makes one demand on education which, I am sure, is quite impossible of realization within the near future, or any future to which any of us can reasonably look forward. Having said that our colleges and universities do a fair job in technological training, that they provide graduates with snips of literature, history, and philosophy, and that they do manage, for all their faults, to turn out a few scholars in specialized fields, he then declares:

But none of these things, good as it is in itself, nor all of them put together, constitutes the most important business of higher education. Unless from our institutions of advanced learning emerge those trained in discrimination,



wise about man's true end and about the proper function of the State in furthering a pursuit of that end, they have failed us seriously, perilously.

This demand brings us face to face with the condition of our age; and two of the prime elements of that condition are that there is no general agreement as to man's true end, or as to the proper function of the State in helping him to attain it. Dr. Bell is sure of the answers because he is a Christian, and because he is a liberal who believes that a nation "exists for the sake of its free citizens and not an enslaved citizenry for the sake of the nation." But increasing numbers of our best, as well as our worst, minds find themselves incapable of embracing the Christian faith, or any other.

Dr. Bell admits, indeed dwells upon, the actual situation. I have quoted him on the irreligiousness of American young men and women; and he even finds it necessary to insist that children must be taught to defy the *mores* of our secularized world if "they are to live according to the ethical teachings of religion." He deplores the fact that "our American civilization has no agreed-upon ethical standards, standards which can be assumed and taught to the oncoming generation as a matter of course," and he goes on to declare that, "We are a people with no common world view, no generally accepted definition

of the nature and purpose of man." He deplores the dominance of what he calls the beast-man, as opposed to the God-man, in almost every field of American life, including education. And he is fully alive to the fact that Statism is gaining ground here as well as abroad.

Yes, he recognizes the situation as it is, but, sustained by his private faith, he refuses to admit that this condition of affairs is fatal to his dearest hopes. The kind of educational system he desiderates, confident in belief and sure of its direction, could exist only in an age of common faith, such as the Middle Ages. The failure of organized religions has been demonstrated by centuries of history, and the decline in faith is proved by the growing tolerance of the faithful, by their readiness to say: "It does not matter in what creed you believe, so long as you believe in one." It was not so in the great days of religion; not so when faith was the mainspring of men and nations — often with most unpleasant consequences.

It is quite possible that a new revelation, operating with compelling force on all mankind, will prove the salvation of humanity; and that all will then be well with education as with other things. But such a revelation cannot be commanded. It can only be awaited — with more or less hope.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN, by John Gunther. \$3.00. *Harper*. The fruit of Mr. Gunther's recent explorations in Eastern Europe is another smoothly written reportorial job, crammed with information rather than ideas, but still intellectually a good cut above the I-was-there efforts of other journalists who come to mind. It is an interesting commentary on his writing skill that his portraits of Bulgaria, Rumania and Albania — the three countries he missed — are as vivid as anything else in the book.

## HISTORY

Dr. Parkes is one of the ablest English students of the Palestinian problem, and his writings on the Jews in particular have won him the admiration of both Jewish and Gentile scholars. Here he attempts a brief survey of Palestinian history from 135 A.D. down to the revival of Israel as a nation. He has done a masterly job, managing to condense a vast amount of information within the space of some 350 pages, and interpreting this information in what appears to be a wholly impartial manner. His chapters on the claims upon Palestine of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religions are especially worthy of commendation.

LABOR IN AMERICA, *A History*, by Foster Rhea Dulles. \$4.50. *Crowell*. Professor Dulles' researches have not dredged up any startling new theories about the American labor movements; for the most part, both his data and his ideas have come from the standard sources. However, for anyone looking for a smoothly-written, fair-minded chronicle of our trade-unions' rise, from the days of apprentice labor to the Taft-Hartley Act, this history should fill the bill. Perhaps because its author was aim-

ing at the textbook market, it has a paucity of contemporary material. The general reader might wish that some comment had been offered on such significant figures of the current scene as Dave Beck, James Carey and Harry Bridges, none of whom is even mentioned.

**NAPOLEON — FOR AND AGAINST**, by Pieter Geyl. \$5.00. *Yale*. Professor Geyl of the University of Utrecht has written an odd and fascinating book. He brings together the conflicting opinions of some thirty French writers on Napoleon — and the result is a volume that makes wonderful reading and that, in the words of Dr. Geyl, only proves that “history is indeed an argument without end.” His own sympathies are “with the *against* rather than with the *for* category,” but that does not interfere with the impartiality of his presentation of both sets of views.

#### PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTER**, *Conflicting Forces in American Labor*, by Sidney Lens. \$4.00. *Henry Regnery*. Although the author of this volume is himself a labor leader — he heads an AFL local in Chicago — he is merciless in his criticisms of the various groups which have prevented American unionism from becoming fully democratic. Much of his book is devoted simply to recording the growth of the labor movement in this country, and to an argument in favor of unionism in general. (“Cold statistics will prove that it is preferable to belong even to a racketeer-dominated union than to no union at all.”) But the

most interesting passages are those analyzing the records of the Stalinists, the racketeers, and the “labor bureaucrats,” who, Mr. Lens argues, present a threat to free unionism that apologists for labor would be foolish to overlook or minimize.

**SHOULD THE COMMUNIST PARTY BE OUTLAWED?**, compiled by Julia E. Johnsen. \$1.50. *Wilson*. A collection of speeches, magazine articles and newspaper editorials, on the pressing question raised in the title, with the pros and cons about equally represented. Anyone able to slog through Miss Johnsen’s three hundred pages should emerge from the experience with a formidable dialectical arsenal; but one may wonder why so much overlapping material, and so much superficial political stuff, had to be included.

**LIVING WITH CRISIS**, *The Battle Against Depression and War*, by Fritz Sternberg. \$2.50. *John Day*. The imminent and inevitable depression which Mr. Sternberg forecast two years ago in his *Coming Crisis* has been pretty much forgotten in his latest book, though he insists now that there *would* have been a depression if it had not been for armament expenditures. On the whole, he believes military spending is necessary, and will continue to be in the predictable future. He feels, however, that war can be avoided, and the Soviet threat eliminated for good, if we build up a socialist West European union and adopt what he calls “progressive” economic policies in other areas of the world. Mr. Sternberg’s

private brand of Marxism continues to be stimulating, dogmatic, and faintly unreal.

### LITERATURE

**MAXIMS AND REFLECTIONS**, by Winston S. Churchill. Selected by Colin Coote and Denzill Batchelor, with an introduction by Colin Coote. \$2.75. *Houghton Mifflin*. The maxims and reflections gleaned from Mr. Churchill's published works and speeches are identified in almost every instance by date and source, and they are all grouped under these ten headings: On Himself, On His Dislikes, On Russia, On His Likes, On War, On Britain and the Empire, On India, On Foreigners, On Politics, and Maxims on Human Conduct. The religious fervor with which the editors made this compilation can be appreciated from the following sentence in Mr. Coote's Introduction: "It is surely the bounden duty of any writer to admit that he owes to Mr. Churchill more than to any other living Englishman the fact that he can still write what he likes." Probably all the great Churchill sentences are here, but there is also a great deal of cheap rhetoric.

**POETS AND STORY-TELLERS**, by David Cecil. \$4.00. *Macmillan*. The subjects Lord Cecil discusses in his latest book are the following: *Anthony and Cleopatra*, John Webster, Thomas Gray, Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, Turgenev, *Adolphe*, Virginia Woolf, and E. M. Forster. They are in Lord Cecil's usual manner, which is to say, they are learned, gracefully written, completely devoid of

wise-cracks (that curse of even the best literary criticism in America), and occasionally very profound. There is no criticism written in America that is remotely like Lord Cecil's in general stature. All of the essays are superb, but the one on Jane Austen is truly a little gem.

### BIOGRAPHY

**DICKENS, *His Character, Comedy, and Career***, by Hesketh Pearson. \$4.00. *Harper*. Of Dickens' genius no one in his senses has any doubt, but of his character there can be many opinions. He was sometimes generous and sometimes a miser; he was a gallant and also a cad; he was a worrisome father and a dreadful husband; he was strong for morality in others and somewhat shabby in his own moral life. Mr. Pearson, on the whole, inclines to be "for" Dickens, but only on the high ground that Dickens simply couldn't help himself: some demon drove him to do the strange and contradictory things he did. This is not among Mr. Pearson's best books; it seems to move slowly, and there are passages of careless writing, but what a story he has to tell! He believes that Dickens was a born actor, and that "If he were alive today he would be the king of film writers, with Hollywood at his feet."

**THE INSIDE STORY OF AN OUTSIDER**, by Franz Schoenberner. \$3.50. *Macmillan*. Like *Confessions of a European Intellectual*, to which it is a sequel, this book is a tribute to its author's charm, erudition and infinite adaptability. For eight years after 1933, the former editor of *Simplicissimus* kept a jump

ahead of the Nazis, always with an unshakable serenity that survived even his internment in France. After the decaying stench of Hitlerian Europe, Mr. Schoenberger was delighted with the youthful puissance of America, and by and large there is little bitterness in this book. His real nostalgia is for an age when reason played a greater part in the affairs of men.

JOHN C. CALHOUN, *Nullifier, 1829-1839*, by Charles M. Wiltse. \$6.00. *Bobbs-Merrill*. This is the second volume in a projected three-volume biography of Calhoun. In the 1830s, as the Great Nullifier, he hurled one challenge after another at the concept that the Federal government was responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Constitution, and he preached an extreme form of the States' Rights doctrine. Mr. Wiltse is obviously an industrious researcher and a cautious scholar. All the greater is the pity that he is so stodgy a writer. There are massive notes and a detailed index.

THE HISTRIONIC MR. POE, by N. Bryllion Fagin. \$4.00. *Johns Hopkins*. Dr. Fagin, who is associate professor of English and drama at the Johns Hopkins University, has done a brief but shrewd study of Poe's life and writings. He stresses the "theatrical quality" of both, and makes out a good case for the proposition that Poe was essentially a showman (which is why his work, especially his poetry, seems most powerful when read aloud). Dr. Fagin's book is so good that it makes virtually all previous studies of Poe largely worthless.

## THE SCIENCES

OEDIPUS. MYTH AND COMPLEX, by Patrick Mullahy. \$5.00. *Hermitage*. This is one of the most useful books on the theory of psychoanalysis in English. Mr. Mullahy, who clearly is a keen student of the subject, here summarizes the ideas of the leading investigators in the field: Freud, Adler, Jung, Rank, Fromm, and Sullivan, and he does so in a manner easily understandable to the intelligent reader. He centers his summaries about each investigator's interpretation of the Oedipus complex. At the end, Mr. Mullahy reprints in its entirety the Oedipus trilogy.

TEMPERATURE AND HUMAN LIFE, by C.-E. A. Winslow and L. P. Herrington. \$3.50. *Princeton*. Drs. Winslow and Herrington, who are associated with the John B. Pierce Laboratory of Hygiene in New Haven, have probed into the fields of geography, history, and physiology to determine the influence of climate on the human organism, and come up with some interesting information. Their general conclusions are that extremes of both heat and cold are bad for health and that "minimum mortality rates occur with a daily mean temperature of 60° to 70° F. and with a mean daily relative humidity of 60 to 80 per cent." Further, it seems, "industrial production and intellectual and social achievement are also highest in climates and at seasons where such conditions . . . prevail." The book appears to be addressed to physiologists, but the lay reader can follow it easily.

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## THE OPEN FORUM

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### MRS. ROOSEVELT'S BED OF THORNS

SIR: This is to register my enthusiastic approval of John Reddy's profile of "Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady of the World," which appeared in the June MERCURY. Although I haven't always agreed with her, she's always held my admiration for her courage. Her life has truly been lived in a bed of thorns, but she's taken all the criticism, smearing, vile insinuations, and hysterical abuse, in her stride.

And the mistakes she's made in the past have not been caused by mean-mindedness or pettiness. When she's gone astray — as in her friendship with left-wingers and her overemphasis on some muddle-headed do-good projects — it's always been because she was trying to find something better for the people of this country. Whereas most of the people who've been slandering her, either by identifying her as a Communist, or by telling smutty smoking-room stories about her travels around the country, are men without vision or a desire to see genuine injustices eliminated.

Even when she's been wrong, she's

been a better person than her detractors  
GEORGE TEMPLETON  
*Washington, D. C.*

SIR: Read condensation of article on Mrs. Roosevelt in *Reader's Digest*. Interesting that she is now against the Communists. Better late than never. Your article, or at least the reprint, fails to mention that we would have a smaller Red problem had she not coddled the REDS in those long years when one had to be a Red to hold government office in Washington. She and her late husband helped the REDS get big. They also helped the labor unions grow about ten times bigger than they were through the infamous Wagner Act. Ever since, we have had higher prices, higher wages, and less merchandise available. The USA would be a far better place had Mrs. Roosevelt never been in the White House.

J. W. KELLOGG

*Oak Park, Ill.*

### SAVING MOTORISTS' MONEY

SIR: I am writing you concerning an article by Harland Manchester entitled

"How Motorists Can Save Money," which appeared in the April *MERCURY*.

In traveling around the country in oil circles, I've learned there has been quite a bit of comment regarding this article, both pro and con. Personally, as one who has been in the oil business the past thirty years, I believe this is one of the best articles I have ever read regarding the use of gasoline and motor oils by the American public. . . . I sincerely trust that every American motorist had an opportunity to read it. . . .

J. B. SAUNDERS

*President, Triangle Refineries, Inc.  
Houston, Tex.*

SIR: I have read the article by Harland Manchester ["How Motorists Can Save Money"] in the April *MERCURY*.

As one concerned with the marketing of petroleum products, I am naturally concerned with any criticism directed at petroleum industry marketing practices. . . . While I am admittedly biased in favor of the products I sell, I have always regarded the *MERCURY* as a publication which was free from bias and would try to present both sides of a controversial subject fairly.

In his article, Mr. Manchester in an apparent attempt to make a sensational disclosure found it necessary to tell only a part of the story regarding frequency of crankcase oil changes.

The American Petroleum Institute, in advocating 1000-mile oil changes for safety, based its recommendation on evidence available as a result of countless analyses of used oil samples supplied by member oil companies. One thousand

miles represents a safe average mileage at which to drain crankcases. This recommendation is not based on the legend that oil "breaks down" or "wears out" as Mr. Manchester implies. It is based on the amount of harmful contaminants, acids, etc., found to be present in used oils, plus a proved knowledge of what represents a harmful concentration of these contaminants as they affect engine life. Mr. Manchester passes off lightly the basic reasons for draining oil with the remark that oil "just gets dirty" and "may get diluted."

With respect to the milages at which car manufacturers recommend oil changes, Mr. Manchester has presented a convincing story. Unfortunately, it is only half of the story — the half that suited his purpose. Without exception, car manufacturers qualify their oil change recommendations to suit the conditions under which the vehicle is operated — a fact that was conveniently omitted. Yet operating conditions are the principal factors in oil contamination. Although the largest contributing factor in favor of 1000-mile oil changes was ignored, mention was made of the fact that car manufacturers recommend changing the oil filter every 5000 to 8000 miles. This is a practice subscribed to by all petroleum marketers. However, automotive oil filters will not remove acids or water from the oil, and only a small part of oil oxidation products do not extend the period over which oil may be safely used.

Another misleading statement occurs in the case of the U. S. Treasury Bureau of Federal Supply's statement. At the

time a recommendation of 4000-mile oil change intervals was made, the government's recommendation was to change oil at 6000 miles. The 6000-mile recommendation was established during the war as an oil conservation measure. It is difficult to see how an increase in oil-change frequency from 6000 to 4000 miles will save 1.5 million gallons of oil annually! Again as with the car manufacturers' recommendations, Mr. Manchester conveniently omitted the qualifying statements regarding vehicle operation, maintenance, etc., which were part of the Bureau's recommendation, and which were the justification for a 4000-mile interval. This same controlled operation and maintenance is not practiced by the average vehicle owner to whom the article was directed.

As long as Mr. Manchester recognized the savings in repair bills which could be made through checking oil on the first spring drives, he might also have recognized the savings in repair bills which might be made through the expenditure of a few dollars for oil used in following a proved safe oil-change frequency of 1000 miles.

A. L. WIEST

*San Mateo, Cal.*

SIR: . . . To tell you all of the errors in the article would require several times as many words as the author used.

Mr. Manchester implies that regular gasoline is good enough for most automobiles. I shall admit that the petroleum industry is manufacturing the finest "regular grade" motor fuel that the world has ever known. But to state that "The

truth is that most of them [buyers of premium gasoline] get no benefit whatsoever," is not to state a fact.

Mr. Manchester would be surprised if he asked the Bureau of Mines about their procedure in making the gasoline survey. What he says the survey "shows" is not a statement of the Bureau of Mines, and is not a conclusion of its experts with whom I, as a former government employee, had almost nineteen years of close personal association.

The oil industry is proud of the fine lubricating oils it manufactures, but I have never heard any "expert," in or out of the industry, claim that it "does not wear out" and that it "improves with use." . . . The fact that a high percentage of the molecules in used lubricating oil could be recovered by chemical processes is academic, so that the expression "does not wear out" is simply a smart turn of words. It would be just as logical to the average automobile driver to advocate that he use the water in the washbowl over and over again because the water does not wear out.

The lubricating oil in the crankcase of the car begins to accumulate non-lubricating components the moment it is driven away after a refill. . . . To say that one can safely and economically follow a recommendation for a long time or for long-distance intervals of crankcase drainage is not good advice to the average driver who has little technical background or experience to guide him and who probably has never even read the manual supplied with his new car.

Incidentally, the Treasury recommendation was directed to government



agencies with "supervised maintenance," not to the general public. It is not followed by all government agencies, and is not the standard used by all members of the originating committee for their cars.

Outside of the purchase of a home, the automobile is to the average owner the highest-priced single unit purchase that he makes. The members of our Lubrication Committee believe that they are performing a valuable service in advocating that the automobile owner keep his car well lubricated. Most of the popular makes of cars take five quarts of crankcase oil. Driving 10,000 miles a year and changing the oil every 4000 miles would cost \$4.75 a year (with 30¢ oil) or \$15.00 if changed every 1000 miles. Between the 4000-mile and 1000-mile oil-change period there is, then, the possible immediate saving of \$10.25.

That \$10.25 includes some of that Treasury "supervised maintenance" without which most of us, the common herd of automobile owners, would be heading for trouble. I own one of those cars listed for long-distance oil changes, but my car dealer gave me a memorandum calling for twelve inspections during the year, and with a milage now a little more over 3200, I have had three oil changes.

Personally, I am a conservationist, as all of my government records prove (that included five years as associate director of the Petroleum Conservation Division, Department of Interior), but I am amused by those who make claims for petroleum conservation by cutting down on the use of lubricating oil, because lubricating oils of every kind represent less than 3 per cent of the average yield

from refining crude petroleum, and as the stream of distillates from which lubricating oils, waxes, and greases are processed is the same stream that, for the most part, becomes diesel or heating oils, it follows that if it were not made into lubricating oil it probably would be burned anyway.

I have only scratched the surface of this subject, but perhaps that is enough to indicate why I feel that by publishing the article you have not done the automobilist a good service.

JOHN W. FREY

*Director Division of Marketing  
American Petroleum Institute*

*Washington, D. C.*

SIR: I am not surprised that two gentlemen who derive their income from the oil industry should take issue with the statements made in my article. I have yet to find any advocate of the 1000-mile oil change who is not dependent upon that industry. All automobile manufacturers, fleet operators and independent automotive engineers whom I have consulted advise much longer oil-change periods. For instance, one of the world's largest bus companies changes oil at 10,000-mile intervals. It seems to me axiomatic that in operating a machine one should follow the advice of the manufacturer and of independent experts rather than that of the sellers of maintenance materials.

However, Mr. Weist makes two charges which require answers. First, that I have ignored special operating conditions which may increase oil demands. If he will re-read the article he will find

I made exceptions for cold weather "stop and go" driving, regular driving in sand or dust, operating during the break-in period and driving in the first warm spring days. Secondly, he charges that I made a "misleading statement" concerning the Bureau of Federal Supply's 4000-mile oil-change recommendation. He states that this supplanted a 6000-mile regulation, and that therefore the new ruling results in no economy. That is not so. During the war, the Director of the Budget, not the Bureau of Federal Supply, advised the 6000-mile oil-change period as a conservation measure. This was dropped when the war ended, and government fleets generally returned to prewar practice, each agency using oil as it saw fit. Then last year the Technical Committee for Lubricants and Liquid Fuels of the Federal Specifications Board, after careful investigation, decided to determine a safe standard practice and came out with the 4000-mile oil-change recommendation, which was adopted on Dec. 30, 1948, by the Treasury's Bureau of Federal Supply.

Mr. Frey of the American Petroleum Institute makes the important point that his industry is now producing the finest "regular grade" motor fuel the world has ever known. He might have added that its average octane number is 75.2, an increase of about five octane numbers in the last four years. This gives an anti-knock performance good enough for most cars on the road, a statement supported by the recommendations of automobile manufacturers. It requires no mental gymnastics to read the Bureau of Mines report and discover that today's

premium gasoline is not very superior in the volatility which aids quick starting.

My use of the established truth, "Oil does not wear out," is dismissed by Mr. Frey as "a smart turn of words" and "academic." He will find the same "smart turn" in *Lubrication* (published by the Texas Co.), March 1931, p. 32: "The formerly believed theory that oil 'wore out,' that in constant use day after day, it would break down, is no longer accepted." In *Oil Power* (published by Standard Oil Co., N. Y.), October, 1929, p. 142: "Many times the question is asked, 'Does lubricating oil wear out?' Following a given quantity of oil through its various stages of use makes it evident that this question should be answered in the negative."

Further proof of the indestructibility of oil can be obtained from the Army Air Force, which since World War I has re-refined great quantities of used lubricating oil, usually saving about 80 per cent of the used lubricant, and putting the same oil through engines as many as ten times. Many commercial air lines, railroads and taxi and bus firms follow the same practice and report that the "laundered" oil is at least equal and often superior to the original product. Last year an estimated 40 million gallons of good lube oil was reclaimed from crankcase drainings. *Academic*, Mr. Frey? As for his attempted *reductio ad absurdum* about reusing bath water, that's what we would do if it cost 30¢ a quart.

Finally, he points out that small individual savings would result by following the recommended oil-change period,

(Continued on page 255)

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(Continued from page 253)

and that the oil thus saved "would probably be burned anyway." Those who have tried to conserve our dwindling natural resources against great future need are familiar with this unrealistic attitude.

HARLAND MANCHESTER

*New York City*

### THE MAN ON THE HILL

SIR: The fine article, "The Bridegroom Cameth Not," by Stewart H. Holbrook, in the May *MERCURY*, recalled a story I heard as a boy from my kinfolk.

It seems that the theory of the Second Coming of Christ eventually reached the Iron Hill community. A sizable number of people prepared for the last eventful day, October 22, 1844, by neglecting the ordinary affairs of life and garbing themselves with ascension robes of pure white.

As the story goes, one very devout brother, in order better to see and hear Gabriel blow his trumpet, climbed upon an old haystack atop a small hill. Attired in his warm white robe, he scanned the sky and the surrounding terrain. The sun rose higher and its rays grew warm against the stack. After hours of watching and waiting, the old man became drowsy, and by mid-afternoon he was sound asleep.

Some boys who were skeptical of the whole business had been watching the proceedings from the shelter of a nearby clump of trees. They conceived the idea of sneaking up to the stack and touching a match to it. As the smoke and fumes rolled up about the old man, he awoke with a start, and was heard to exclaim,

rather sorrowfully, "Hell—just as I expected."

Doubtless, some people will say this is just another example of false folklore, but I like to cherish the story as the truth. I well remember one farmer who had the walls of the farm buildings covered with painted signs warning of the imminence of Christ's return. These buildings are long since gone, but we still have Seventh Day Adventists with us. They are known around here as good citizens.

GLEN F. BAILEY

*Maquoketa, Ia.*

### CULTS AND CLAQUES IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS

SIR: This is to thank Ralph de Toledano for his magnificent article ["The Cult of the Conductor"] in the June *MERCURY*.

Mr. de Toledano's thoughts have been my own for a long time. I remember many years ago being practically ostracized at a party for criticizing a Toscanini performance, and for describing the Stokowski transcriptions as "varnishing over a beautiful piece of old wood." The music "business" has really gone beyond all reasonable bounds. Vast sums of money are spent to promote "names" rather than music.

I'm a humble player of the old lute—the precise opposite of what modern music-lovers are made to want. When I give one of my few concerts, it is a sort of defiance of all the "glamor boys" that Mr. de Toledano writes about.

SUZANNE BLOCH

*New York City*

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Sometimes you can break all the rules—and get away with it.

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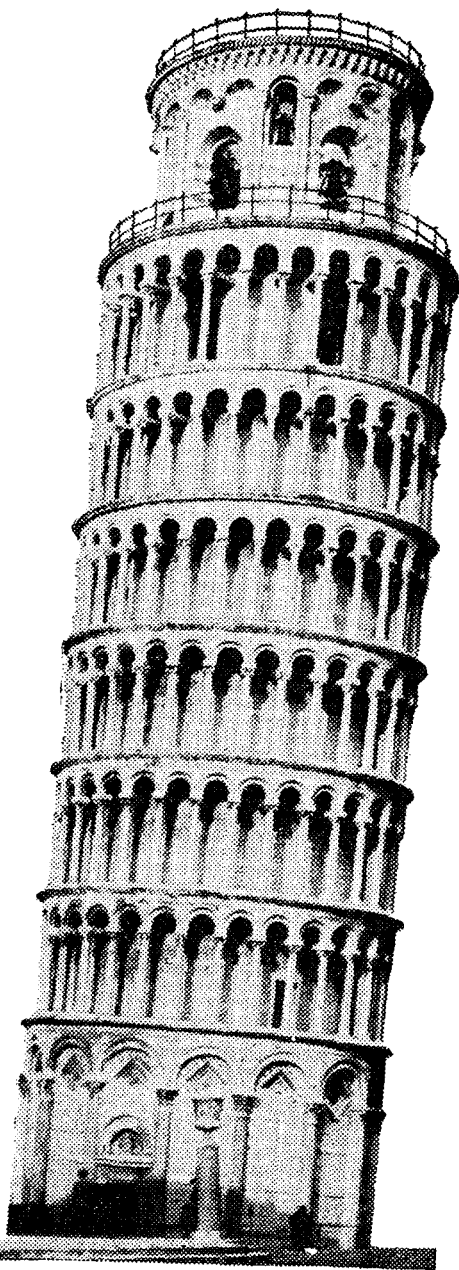
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—Continued from back cover

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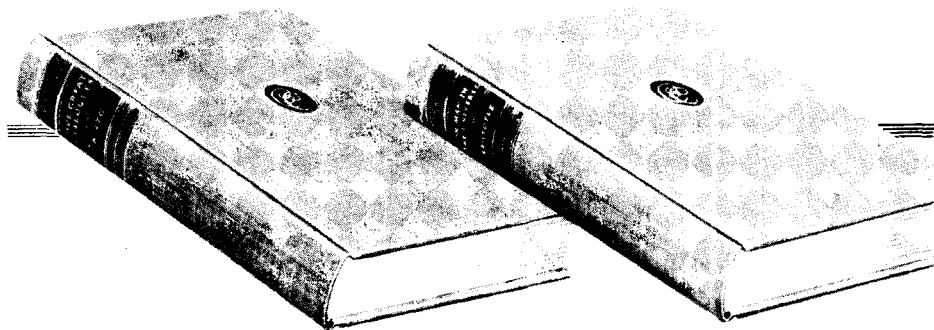
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